

The Winter's Tale

by William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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Chapter One Kings' Friendship

One fine winter evening in the golden days of long ago, two mellow ambassadors share a bottle of fine, rare wine to complete their sumptuous supper, and they reflect fondly on the amicable relations between their countries. Bohemia, to the north on the Adriatic Sea, flourishes in the bounty of its fertile, productive fields; here in the south, urbane Sicilia prospers from its commerce, conducted all across the broad Mediterranean.

Lord Archidamus, an elderly guest accompanying his own nation's monarch, is enjoying their visit—a lengthy one. “If you shall chance, Camillo, to visit Bohemia, on a like occasion whereon *my* services are now on foot, you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.”

Lord Camillo, his hair already silvering, tells his friend, “I think this coming summer the King of Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation which he justly owes him.”

“Whereupon our entertainment here shall *shame* us,” moans Archidamus, aware of the southern court's greater sophistication. “But we will be justified by our *loves*; for indeed—”

“I beseech you—” Camillo interrupts gently; he has tried to make the guests at King Leontes' palace feel at home.

“*Verily* I speak it, in the freedom of my knowledge,” says Archidamus, smiling. “We cannot with such magnificence... in so rare...” He shakes his head. “I know not what to say.

“We will give you *sleepy drinks*,” he concludes, wryly, “so that your senses, unintelligent of our insufficiency, may, though they cannot *praise* us, as little *accuse* us!”

Camillo laughs. “You'd pay a great deal too dearly for what's given freely!”

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

King Leontes has often told Lord Camillo, his advisor and something of a confessor, about his friendship with the royal visitor. “Sicilia cannot show himself *overly* kind to Bohemia! They were trained together in their childhood, and there was rooted betwixt them then such an *affection* that it cannot choose but *branch* now!

“Since their more-mature dignities and royal necessities have made separation of their society, their encounters, though not in person, have been regally attorneyed, with interchange of gifts, letters, loving *embassies*. They have *seemed* to be together, though absent—‘shook hands’ as over a vast, and embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposèd winds.

“May the heavens continue their loves!”

Archidamus nods. “I think there is not in the *world* either malice or matter to alter it!” They both enjoy the alliance—and they have an added reason to expect it to continue: both kings have sons as heirs. The visitors have been charmed by the Sicilian boy. “You have an unspeakable comfort in *your* young prince—Mamillius is a gentleman of the greatest promise that ever came into my note!” Both lords feel keenly the importance of royal succession.

“I very well agree with you in the hopes for him,” says Camillo. “He is a gallant child: one who indeed remedies the subjects, makes old hearts fresh! They that *went on crutches* ere he was born desire *yet* their life, hoping to see *him* a *man*!”

“Would they else be content to *die*?”

Camillo laughs. “Yes—if there were no *other* excuse why they should desire to live! And if the king *had* no son, they would desire to live, even on crutches, till he *had* one!”

King Polixenes of Bohemia tells his host he has decided that he must return to his northern home. “*Nine changes* of the watery star”—monthly cycles of the moon—“hath been in the shepherd's note since we have left our throne without a burthen!

“Time *as long again* could be filled up, my brother, with our *thanks*, and yet we should for perpetuity go hence in debt! And therefore, like ciphers”—zeroes—“that by *placement* stand as if rich, I’d multiply one ‘We thank you!’ by many *thousands* to go with it!”

“Hold your thanks a while, and pay them when you *depart*,” urges King Leontes gently, in the throne room with his wife and young son.

“Sir, that’s *tomorrow*,” says Polixenes. “I am petitioned by my fears of what may chance or breed upon our absence, and hopes that no *sharp* winds may blow at home!—making us say, ‘This is put forth too *truly*’”—admit that detractors are right. “Besides, I have stayed to tire even *your* royalty.”

“We are tougher, brother, than *you* can put us to’t!”

Polixenes laughs, but shakes his head. “No longer a stay.”

“One *seven-night* longer!”

“Very sooth, *tomorrow*—”

“Then we’ll part the time *between*,”—split the difference, “and in *that* I’ll hear no gainsaying!” insists Leontes

“Press me not so, I beseech you,” says Polixenes apologetically. “There is no tongue that moves—no, none i’ the *world!*—which could win me as soon as *yours*. So it would *now*, were there *necessity* in your request, although ’twere needful I denied it.

“But my affairs do ever drag me *homeward*—which to hinder were, by your leave, a *whip* to *me*, my stay a charge and *trouble* to *you*. To spare us both: *Farewell*, our brother!”

Leontes turns to his pregnant wife, Hermione. “Tongue *tied*, our queen? Speak you!”

“I had thought, sir, to have held my peace until *you* had *drawn oaths* from him to stay!” she replies. “You, sir, charge him too *coldly!* Tell him you are *certain* all in Bohemia’s *well!*—as the assurance of by-gone days”—its history of prosperity—“proclaims! Say *that* to him, and he’s beaten from his best ward!”—loses the key defensive position.

Leontes nods. “Well *said*, Hermione!”

But she knows what really calls the Bohemian king away: “Telling us he *longs to see his son* were strong—let him only say *so*, and we’ll let him *go*,” she says kindly. “Let him *swear* so, and he *shall* not stay!—we’ll *thwack* him hence with *distaffs!*”

She smiles at Polixenes. “And yet I’ll venture to *borrow* another week of your royal presence: when to Bohemia you take *my* lord, I’ll give him my commission for *a month* beyond the date prefixed for *his* parting!” She turns to her husband for approval. “And yet indeed, Leontes, *I* love *thee* not a jar o’ the clock behind what she his lady does *her* lord!

“You’ll stay?” she asks the visitor.

Polixenes’ smile is warm, but he demurs. “No, madam.”

Hermione pleads, “Nay, but you *will!*”

“I *may* not, verily!”

“*Verily!*” laughs Hermione. “You put me off with *limber* vows! But, though you would seek to *unsphere the stars* with oaths, I should yet say, ‘Sir, no going!—*Verily*, you shall not go!’ A *lady’s* ‘verily’ is as potent as a *lord’s!*”

She sees that he still resists. “Will you go *yet?*—force me to keep you as a *prisoner*, not like a *guest*, so that you can pay your *fees* when you depart, and save your *thanks?*” Polixenes laughs; prison inmates are required to pay for their keep. “How say you? My prisoner, or my *guest?* By your dreaded ‘*verily*,’ *one* of them you shall be!”

Polixenes laughs again, finally persuaded. “Your *guest*, then, madam!” he says, with a bow. “To be your prisoner would imply an offence to you—which is less easy for me to *commit* than you to *punish!*”

Hermione beams. “Not as your jailer, then, but your kind *hostess* I’ll question you about my lord’s tricks and yours when you were *boys!* Come!—were you *pretty* ‘lordlings’ then?”

“We were, fair queen, two lads that thought there was no more ahead than such a day *tomorrow* as was *today*—and being *boys* eternally,” says Bohemian king, now a man of thirty.

Hermione glances mischievously at Leontes. “Was not my lord the verier *wag* o’ the two?”

“We were as twinnèd *lambs* that did frisk i’ the sun,” says Polixenes, “and bleated the one at the other! What *we* exchanged was innocence for *innocence*; we knew not the doctrine of *ill-doing*, nor dreamed that *any* did. Had we pursued that life, and had our weak spirits ne’er been reared higher with *stronger* blood,”—at puberty, “we should have answered heaven boldly, ‘*Not guilty!*’—of accusation *cleared*, but for that hereditarily ours”—Adam’s fall.

Hermione’s frown is comical. “By that we gather you *have since tripped!*”

Polixenes grins. “Oh, my most *sacred* lady, temptations *have* since then been borne to us!—for in *those* unfledgèd days was my wife a *girl*; and *your* precious self had then not *crossed the eyes* of my young play-fellow!”

“*Grace*, to boot!” laughs Hermione, in mock indignation. “To *that* make no *conclusion*, lest you say your queen and I are *devils!*” He laughs again. “Yet go on; the offences *we* have made you do we’ll *answer* to—if you *first* sinned with us, and then with *us* you did continue fault!—and if you slipped not with any *but* with us!”

Leontes, who has been distracted, making faces with his son, dislikes her frank tenor. He asks, curtly, “Is he won yet?” He is smiling, but the visitor *has* stayed quite long, and Hermione is heavy with child; she is due to give birth next month.

Hermione nods happily. “He’ll stay my lord.”

“At *my* request he would not,” notes Leontes, a bit piqued. He recovers: “Hermione, my dearest, thou never spokest to better purpose.”

Hermione raises an eyebrow playfully. “*Never?*”

“Never but *once*,” the king amends.

“What! Have I *twice* said well?” asks Hermione, in facetious surprise. “When was’t *before*? I prithee tell me!—*cram* us with praise, and make us as fat as tame things! One good deed dying *tongueless* slaughters a thousand *waiting* upon that! Our *praises* are our *wages!*”

“You may ride us with one soft *kiss* a thousand furlongs ere with *spur* we beat an acre!

“But on to the *goal*: My *last* good deed was to entreat his stay; what was my *first*? It has an elder *sister*, or I mistake you!—oh, I would that her name were *Grace!* Only once before I spoke to the purpose... *when?* Nay, let me *have’t!*—I *long!*”

Her jest about longing touches a sore point. Leontes’ smile is faint as he answers, remembering his ardent courting. “Well, it was when *three crabbèd months* had soured themselves to death ere I could make thee open thy white hand and clasp to thyself my love! But then didst thou utter, ‘I am yours forever!’”

Hermione beams at him, touching his hand tenderly. “’Tis *grace* indeed,” she says softly. “Why, look you, now I have spoken to a *purpose* twice: the one earned forever a royal *husband*; the other for some while a *friend*.”

As the queen chats with the visiting king, Leontes again finds himself chafed by their animation. The past three months have been strained between him and his wife, whose condition has diminished their intimacy. His unsatisfied desire has led him from vague resentment to an emerging realization of actual jealousy.

He watches the two; both speak cordially following Polixenes’ decision to tarry in Sicilia. *Too hot!* thinks Leontes. *To mingle friendship too far is mingling bloods! I have tremor cordis upon me: my heart dances—but not for joy—not joy!*

Thus may entertaining put on a free face—derive a liberty from heartiness, bounty from a fertile bosom, and well become the agent. It may, I grant. But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers, as now they are, and making smiles as if practised in a looking-glass, and then sighing, as ’twere at ‘the death o’ the deer’—oh, that is entertainment my bosom likes not!—nor my brows!

The forehead of a cuckold is symbolically horned; Leontes is succumbing to an archetypal dread.

He regards his son, a lad of seven. “Mamillius, art thou my boy?”

“Aye, my good lord!”

The king nods slowly. “In *effect*.” Leontes sees a puzzled frown; he affectionately tousles the lad’s hair. “Why, that’s my bawcock!” he says. “What, hast smutched thy nose? They say it is a copy of *mine*,” he says, wiping the prince’s face with the corner of a kerchief. “Come, captain, we must be neat!”

And yet the steer and the calf are both called ‘neat.’ Each bears horns. “Not *neat*, but *cleanly*, captain,” he amends.

He sees Hermione’s reassuring pat on a held hand. Polixenes is confirming that he does indeed miss his own son. But Leontes cannot hear; his face reddens. *Still virginalling upon his palm!*—touching it as if stroking harpsichord keys.

He smiles at Mamillius. “How now, you wanton calf! Art thou *my* calf?”

“Yes, if you will, my lord.”

“Thou want’st the hair and hard forehead that I have, to be fully like me.” Leontes considers the boy’s happy face. “Yet they say we are almost as like as eggs—*women* say so, that will say *anything*....”

But were they false as blacks o’er-dyèd—as wind, as waters? False as dice would be wishèd by one who fixes no bourn ’twixt his and mine!

He watches the child carefully. *Yet it were true to say this boy were like me.* “Come, Sir Page, look on me with your welkin eye!” Blue-eyed Mamillius is smiling up at him. “*Sweet villain!* Most dear’st! My *collop!*”

Patting the young prince on the head, the king looks back, pondering, at Hermione. *Can thy dam?—May’t be?*

Suspicion!—*thy invention stabs even the confirmèd! Thou dost make ‘possible’ things not held so—communicatest with dreams! How can this be: With what’s unreal thou art co-active, and followest from nothing! Then ’tis very credible thou mayst conjoin with something; and thou dost!—even what’s beyond commission!*

And I find it! I add that to the infection of my brains—and the hardening of my brows! He rubs his forehead.

Polixenes has noticed his host’s sullen frown. “What means Sicilia?” he asks, concerned.

“He seems somewhat unsettled,” says Hermione, going to her husband.

Polixenes follows. “How, my lord! What cheer? How is’t with you, best brother?”

Hermione tells him. “You look as if you held a brow of much distraction! Are you disturbed, my lord?”

Leontes denies his fear. “*No*, in good earnest.” He pauses for a moment. “Sometimes Nature will slip—reveal its *folly*, its *tenderness*—and make of itself a *pastime* for harder bosoms. Looking on the lines of my boy’s face, methought I did recoil twenty-three years, and saw *myself*, enbreechèd, 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 was then to *this* kernel, this squash, this... *gentleman!*” He asks the boy, testing, “Mine honest friend, would you take *eggs* instead of *money*?”—let yourself be cheated with promises.

“*No*, my lord!” replies Mamillius fiercely. “I’d *fight!*”

“You would?” laughs Leontes, pleased. “Why, *happy man* be his dole!” He looks at Polixenes. “My brother, are you as fond of *your* young prince as we do seem to be of ours?”

“If I’m at *home*, sir,” says Polixenes, now painfully aware of having just agreed to stay away longer, “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 day short as December’s, and with his varying *child-ness*, *cures* in me thoughts that would thicken my blood!”

“So stands this squire officed with me,” claims Leontes, taking Mamillius by the hand. “We two will walk, my lord, and leave you two to your graver steps.”

“Hermione, how thou lovest *us*, show it in our brother’s welcome; let what is dear in Sicily be cheap! Next to thyself and my young rover, he’s heir apparent to my heart.”

Hermione nods. “If you would seek us, we are yours i’ the garden; shall we attend you there?”

“To your own bents dispose you; you’ll be found, be you beneath the sky.” Leontes replies casually; but in his mind, *found* echoes into *found out*.

I am angling now, though you perceive not how I give line! In so fishing, he is already caught.

He watches his wife and his friend leave, heading for the garden. *Go to, go to!* Speaking with the taller king, she looks up at his face; Leontes watches her lips. *How she holds up the nub, the beak to him!* As they step out onto the soft, uneven soil, her hand seeks support. *And takes an arm with the boldness of an allowing wife to her husband!*

Gone already! The adults have moved out of sight, but he still sees an imagined rival. *Inch-thick, knee-deep!—o’er head and ears, a forkèd one!*

He drops Mamillius’s hand. “Go play, boy; *play*.”

Thy mother plays! And I play too—but a disgracèd part, whose issue will hiss me to my grave! Contempt and clamour will be my knell!

“Go, play, boy,” he mutters—picturing the royal visitor. “*Play*.”

There have been, or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now; and many a man there is, even now while I ponder this, who holds his wife by the arm, who little thinks she has been sluiced in’s absence; but his pond was fished by his near neighbour—by his neighbour Sir Smile!

But there’s comfort in’t, whiles other men have gates, and those gates opened, as are mine, against their will! Should all despair who have revolted wives, a tenth of mankind would hang themselves! Physic for’t there is none; this is a bawdy planet! Lechery will strike where ’tis powerful—and ’tis prominent, believe it, from east to west, north and south!

Be it concluded there’s no barricado for a belly! Know’t: it will let the enemy in and out—with bag and baggage! Many thousands of us have the disease, yet feel’t not.

He sees that Mamillius has been watching him brood. “How now, boy?”

“*I am like you, I say.*”

Leontes murmurs, dryly, “Well *that’s* some comfort.” He sees a nobleman enter the room. “What, Camillo there?”

“Aye, my good lord,” says the senior adviser, coming to him.

“Go play, Mamillius,” says Leontes. “Thou’rt an *honest* man,” he says sourly, watching the boy trot off to find his nursemaid Emilia.

The king nods toward the garden. “Camillo, this *great sir* will stay yet longer.”

The advisor smiles, surprised but pleased; he likes Polixenes, and has previously heard the king urge him to extend the visit. “You had much ado to make his anchor *hold*; yet when you cast it out, it ever came up.”

“Didst *note* it?”

“He would not stay as you petitioned—made his business more material.” Camillo thinks the visitor has neglected his own dominion for too long.

“Didst *perceive* it?” Leontes now finds another layer of worry: his standing with his courtiers. *They’re here with me already!—whispering, sounding! ‘Sicilia is a....’*

He doesn’t want to think *cuckold*, let alone speak the word. But now, it seems, the matter is open to public comment—out of his hands. *’Tis far gone, when I shall be last to gust it!*

He wants to learn more. “How came’t, Camillo, that he *did* stay?”

“At the good queen’s entreaty.”

“‘*At the queen’s*’ be’t,” says Leontes dourly. “‘Good’ *should* be pertinent, but, as it is, it is *not!*”

“Was this understanding taken by any pate but *thine*?—for *thy* perception is *seeking*, will draw in more than the common block’s. Not noted, is’t, but by the finer natures?—by some

severals of extraordinary head-piece? Lower messes”—common feeders—“perchance are to this business purblind.... *Say.*”

“*Business, my lord?*” Camillo is puzzled. “I think most understand that Bohemia stays here longer—”

“*Eh?*”

“Stays here longer.”

“Aye—but *why?*”

Camillo is nonplussed. “To satisfy Your Highness, and the entreaties of our most gracious mistress—”

“*Satisfy!*” cries Leontes. “The *entreaties* of your *mistress!* ‘*Satisfy!*’—let *that suffice!*”

“I have trusted thee, Camillo, with all the nearest things to my heart, as well as my chamber-councils, wherein priest-like thou hast cleansed my bosom. I from thee departed, thy penitent, reformed.

“But we have been *deceived* through thy integrity!—deceived by that which *seems* so!”

“Be it forbid, my lord!” says the loyal lord.

In his arrogant certainty, King Leontes brooks no dissent. “*Abiding* upon’t, thou art *not honest!*—or, if thou inclinest *that way*, thou art a *coward* who boxes *honesty* behind, refraining from the course requirèd! Or else thou must be counted a *servant*—grafted in my serious *trust*, but therein *negligent!*—or else a *fool* that seest a game *played home*, the rich stake *drawn*—and takest it all for *jest!*”

Camillo is taken aback, but defiant. “My gracious lord, I may *be* negligent, foolish and fearful—*man* is not free of every one of these; and among the infinite doings of the world, his negligence, his folly, his fear, sometimes show forth.

“But in *your* affairs, my lord, if ever I were willful or negligent, it was my *folly*; if industriously I played the fool, it was my *negligence*, not weighing well the end; if ever fearful to do a thing where I the *issue*”—result—“doubted—when nonperformance did *cry out* against execution—’twas a fear which oft infects the *wisest!*”

“These, my lord, are such *allowèd* infirmities that honesty is *never* free of!”

“But, I 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!”

His dereliction seems obvious to Leontes. “Ha’ not you *seen*, Camillo? But that’s beyond doubt!—you *have*, or your eye-glass is thicker than a *cuckold’s horn!*—or *heard*, for about a vision so *apparent*, Rumour cannot be *mute!*—or *thought*, for cogitation *resides not* in that man who does not think *my wife is slippery!*”

“If thou wilt *confess*, then *say my wife’s a hobby-horse!*—deserves a name as *rank* as any flax-wench that *puts out* before her troth-plight! *Say’t*, and *affirm!*—or else impudently *naysay*, having neither eyes nor ears nor thought!”

But Camillo is appalled. “I would not be a *stander-by* to hear my sovereign mistress clouded so without my *immediate vengeance taken!*”

“Beshrew thy *heart*, you never spoke what did become you *less than this!*—*reiterating* which were *sin as deep as that*, even were it true!”

Leontes glowers at him. “Is *whispering* nothing? Is leaning *cheek to cheek?* Is meeting *noses?* *Kissing* with *inside lip?* Stopping the career of laughing with a *sigh?*—a note infallible of *breaking honesty!* Horsing *foot on foot?*—*skulking* in *corners?* Wishing clocks more swift?—hours *minutes*—noon *midnight?*”

“And *all eyes blinded* by the pin and web”—as if with cataracts—“but *theirs*, only theirs who would be wicked *unseen!*”

“Is this *nothing?* Why, then the *world* and *all that’s in’t* is nothing!—the covering *sky* is nothing!” he cries. “*My wife* is nothing, *Bohemia* nothing—nor *no thing*”—a term for penis—“have these nothings, if *this* be nothing!”

Camillo stares at him, aghast. “Good my lord, be *cured* of this *diseased opinion!*—and *betimes!*—for ’tis most *dangerous!*”

“*Say it be. ’Tis true!*” insists Leontes

“*No!—no, my lord!*”

“*It is!*—you lie, *you lie!*” cries Leontes angrily. “I say thou *liest*, Camillo, and I *despise* thee!—pronounce thee a gross *lout*, a mindless *slave!*—or else a hovering *temporizer*, who canst with thine eyes at once see good and evil, inclining to them *both!* Were my wife’s *liver* as infected as her *life*, she would not live the running of one glass!”—an hour.

“*Who* does infect her?” demands Camillo, exasperated.

“Why, he that *wears* her like a *medal* hanging about his neck!—*Bohemia!*—who, if I had *true* servants about me, bearing eyes to see alike *mine honour* and *their profit*, for their own particular thrifts they would *do* that which would *undo more doing!*”

The counselor is shocked to realize that the distraught king has begun to wish for Polixenes’ death.

Leontes glares. “Aye, and *thou*, his cupbearer—whom I from meaner form have benched and reared to ‘Your Worship’—who mayst see plainly as heaven sees earth and earth sees heaven how I am *gallèd!*—mightst *bespice* a cup, to give mine enemy a *lasting blink!*—which draught to *me* were a *cordial!*”

But the nobleman is loath to abuse hospitality by murdering a guest; he tries to reason with the king. “Sir—my *lord!*—I *could* do this—and with no *rash* potion, but with a *lingering* dram that should not work maliciously like poison. But I cannot believe this defect to be *in* my dread mistress, so *sovereignly* being *honourable!*”

“I have loved thee—”

Leontes interrupts: “Make *that* thy topic and go *rot!*” He is furious at Camillo’s balking. “Dost think I am so *muddy*, so *unsettled*, as to arraign *myself* in this vexation—sully the purity and whiteness of my sheets—which to *preserve* is *sleep*, which being *spotted* is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of *wasps!*—give *scandal* to the blood o’ the prince, my son, who I do think is mine and love as mine—without ripe *cause for it?*”

“Would I *do* this? Could a man so *breach?*”

Camillo can see that argument merely fuels the king’s fury, and that he needs time to become calm. “I must believe you, sir.” He nods slowly, gravely. “I do; and will *fetch off* Bohemia for’t—provided that, when he’s removed, Your Highness will take *again* your queen as she was yours *at first!*—even for your son’s sake!—thereby forestalling the injury from tongues in courts and kingdoms known as allied to yours.”

Leontes nods. “Thou dost advise me even as I mine own course have set down.” He scowls. “*I’ll* give no blemish to her honour—*none!*”

Camillo hears the sarcasm—and equivocation. “My lord, go then, and with a countenance as clear as friendship wears at feasts, keep with Bohemia, and with your queen.” Camillo sees that Leontes is watching him closely; he too can mislead: “I am his cupbearer; if from me he have *wholesome* beverage, *account me not your servant.*”

Says the king “This is all: *do ’t*, and thou hast the one half of my heart; do’t *not*, thou split’st thine *own!*”

“I’ll do’t, my lord,” says Camillo grimly, his longtime loyalty already suffering division.

Leontes heads out into the garden. “I will *seem* friendly—as thou hast *advised* me.”

Chapter Two

Escape, Imprisonment

Oh, *miserable lady!* thinks Lord Camillo.
But as for me, what case stand I in? Must I be the poisoner of good Polixenes? My

ground for doing it is obedience to a master—one in rebellion with himself, who will have all that are his be so, too!

From doing this deed, promotion follows.... He shakes his head. *Even if I could find example of thousands who had struck anointed kings and flourished after, I'd not do't!—and since not brass nor stone nor parchment bears one, let villainy itself forswear't!*

To do't not is certainly for me a break-neck; I must forsake the court!

He can only wish for better fortune—for all. *O, happy star, reign now!*

Here comes Bohemia....

Polixenes is returning from the garden. He has sensed a curtness in Leontes' abrupt leave-taking, in his leading Hermione away—almost pulling her. *This is strange! Methinks my favour here begins to warp....* And now he sees that his friend's kindly ambassador stares at the ground, offering no greeting. "Not speak? *Good day, Camillo!*"

"Hail, most royal sir."

"What is the news i' the court?"

"None rare, my lord."

Polixenes glances back toward the garden. "The king hath on him such a countenance as if he had *lost some province!*—and in a region loved as he loves *himself!* Even now I met him with customary compliment, but he, wafting his eye to the contrary, and falling the lid with much contempt, speeds *from* me!—and so leaves me to consider what is breeding that changeth thus his manner...."

The ambassador looks away. "I dare not know, my lord."

"How? *Dare* not! You *do* know, yet dare *not?*—be intelligible to me! 'Tis hereabouts, for what you *know* yourself you *must*, and cannot say you dare not."

He sees the nobleman's discomfort. "Good Camillo, your changing complexions are to me a mirror which shows me that *mine* is changèd, too—for I must be a party in this alteration, finding myself thus altered with't!"

"There is a *sickness* which puts some of us in distemper," Camillo tells him, distraught, "but I cannot name the disease. Yet it is caught from you who yet are well."

"How? Caught from *me?*" asks Polixenes, perplexed. "Make me not sighted like the *basilisk!*"—the serpent whose gaze is lethal. "I have looked on thousands who have sped the *better* for my regard, but *killed* none so!"

"Camillo, as you are certainly a *gentleman—clerical* in *experience* thereunto, which no less adorns our gentry than noble *names* of our parents, in whose succession we are gentle—I *beseech* you: if you know aught which does behoove my ignorant knowledge to be *informed* thereof, imprison't not by concealment!"

Camillo is in ethical torment. "I may not answer."

"A *sickness* caught from me; and yet I am well...." Polixenes' concern grows stronger. "I *must* be answered! Dost thou *hear*, Camillo: I conjure thee by all the parts of man which *honour* does acknowledge—whereof not the *least* is this suit of *mine*—that thou *declare* what incidency thou dost guess—if *harm* is creeping toward me!—how far off, how near, which way to be prevented, if it's to be—if *not*, how best to bear it!"

"Sir, I *will* tell you, since I am chargèd in *honour*, and by him that I think honourable! Therefore *mark my counsel*, which must be *followed* even as swiftly as I mean to utter it!—or to both yourself and me cry '*Lost!*'—and so *the end!*"

"*On*, good Camillo!"

"I am appointed by him to *murder* you!"

Polixenes' eyes widen. "By *whom*, Camillo?"

"By the king."

"*For what?*"

"He thinks—nay, with all confidence he *swears*, as if he had *seen't* or been an instrument to press you *to't!*—that you have touched his queen *forbiddenly!*"

Polixenes stares, aghast at the idea. “*Oh, then may best blood turn into an infected jelly!—worse than the great’st infection that e’er was heard or dreaded!*”

“Turn then my freshest reputation to an *odour* that strikes the dullest nostril where I arrive, and may my approach be *shunnèd*—aye, *hated* too!—and *my name* be yoked with his that did betray the Best!”—*Judas*.

Camillo shakes his head sadly: “*Swear* against his thought by each particular *star* in *heaven*, and by all their *influences!*—you may as well forbid the *sea* to obey the *moon* as by oath to counsel, remove or shake the fabric of *his folly!*—whose belief is piled upon his foundation, and will continue during the standing of his body.”

Polixenes is amazed by the change. “How could this have grown?”

“I know not,” says Camillo, increasingly apprehensive, “but I am sure ’tis safer to *avoid* what’s grown than question how ’twas born! If, therefore, you dare trust my honesty—that lies enclosed in this trunk which you shall *bear along*, impawnèd—*away tonight!*”

“To your followers”—servants—“I will whisper the business, and will, by twos and threes at several posterns”—gatehouses—“clear them from the city. As for myself, I’ll put my fortunes, which by my revealing this are lost, here into *your* service.

“Be not uncertain; for, by the honour of my parents, I have uttered *truth!*—which if you seek to *prove,*”—by confronting Leontes, “I’ll dare not be with you! Nor shall *you* be safer than one condemnèd *by the king’s own mouth*—his *execution* thereby *sworn!*”

Polixenes nods. “I do *believe* thee—I saw his *heart* in ’s *face!* Give me thy hand! Be *pilot* to me,” he says, as they shake hands, “and thy place”—rank and position—“shall ever neighbour mine! My ships are ready, as my people did expect my departure hence two days ago.

“This jealousy is over a precious creature; as she is *rare* must it be *great*; as *his* person is *mighty* must it be *violent!*—and as he does conceive he is dishonoured by a man who ever professed to love him, why, his revenges must for that be made more *bitter!*”

“Fear o’ershades me! O good *expedition*, be my friend!—and comfort the gracious *queen*, a party in his *theme*, yet nothing in his ill-taken suspicion.” He can hardly believe that he is suspected; Hermione, he thinks, is beyond reproach.

“Come, Camillo! I will respect thee as a *father* if thou bear’st my life off hence! Let us avoid!”

“Please it Your Highness to take the urgent hour, it is in mine authority to command the keys of all the posterns! Come, sir, *away!*”

The sun is already setting on Sicilia as they hurry from the palace.

Under duress, Camillo promised to “fetch off Bohemia.” He wonders: when Polixenes has indeed gone, will Leontes keep his word?

Attended by two of her waiting-gentlewomen, the queen has been playing with her son in the castle’s royal quarters. He is happy and boisterous, but she tires easily in her eighth month, and his enthusiasm taxes her now-limited energy.

“Take the boy to you,” she pleads wearily. “He so troubles me, ’tis past enduring!”

“Come, my gracious lord, shall I be your playfellow?” asks the older, Margaret.

“No,” protests Mamillius, “I’ll none of *you.*”

“Why, my sweet lord?”

“You’ll kiss me *hard*, and speak to me as if I were a *baby* still!” He regards the younger. “I love *you* better.”

“And why so, my lord?” asks Emilia, smiling.

He looks at her cosmetics. “Because your brows are not *black*. Yet black brows, they say, become some women best—so long as there be not too much *hair* there, but a semicircle or a half-moon made with a *pen!*”

Emilia laughs. “Who taught you this?”

“I learnt it out of women’s faces,” says Mamillius. “Pray now, what colour *are* your eyebrows?”

She grins. “*Blue*, my lord!”

“Nay, that’s a *mock!* I have seen a lady’s *nose* that has been blew, but not her eyebrows!”

Even Margaret laughs. But she chides: “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, if we would *have* you!”

“She *is* spread of late into a goodly bulk,” observes Emilia. “May a *goodly* time encounter her!”

The boy returns to his mother, and clings quietly.

Hermione is surprised—but pleased. “What wisdom stirs amongst you?” she asks the other women, who simply smile. She kisses Mamillius. “Come, sir, now I am for you again! Pray you, sit by us, and tell ’s a tale!”

“Merry or sad shall’t be?”

“As merry as you will!”

“A *scary* tale’s best for winter,” the boy decides. “I have one about *spirits* and *goblins!*”

“Let’s have *that*, good sir! Come on, and sit down! Do your best to *fright* me with your sprites!—you’re *powerful* at it!”

“There was a man—”

“Nay, come, sit down; then on,” says the queen.

“—dwelt by a churchyard.” He moves closer, sits beside her, and whispers: “I will tell it softly; yond *crickets* shall not hear it!”

“Come on, then, and give’t me in mine ear,” says Hermione. The child starts to share a ghost story with his mother alone.

The gentlewomen rise as Leontes approaches with several noblemen, and enters the room.

“Was he met there by his *train?*” the king asks Lord Antigonus, his chief deputy. “And *Camillo* with him?”

“Behind a tuft of pines I espied them,” Antigonus tells him. “Never saw I men *scour* so”—crouch so furtively—“on their way! I eyed them even to their ships.”

Leontes mutters, “How blest am I in my *just censure*, in my true opinion; how *accursèd* in being *so* blest! Alack for *lesser* knowledge!”

“There may be, in the cup, a *spider* steepèd, and a man may drink the venom, yet partake of no harm, for his *knowledge* is not infected. But if one present the abhorrèd ingredient to his *eye*, making known what he hath drunk, he grabs at his throat, cracks his sides with violent hefts!”

“I have drunk—and *seen the spider!*”

“*Camillo* was his help in this, his *pander!*—*there* is a plot against my *crown!*—my *life!* All’s *true* that was suspected! That false villain whom *I* employed was *pre-employed* by *him!* He has discovered my design, and I remain a *pinchèd* thing—yea, a very *trick* for them to play at will!”

“How came the posterns so easily open?” Gate guards should have stopped the escape.

“By his great authority, which often hath prevailed no less than so at your command.”

Leontes nods angrily. “I know’t too well!”

He turns to glare at the queen. “Give me the boy!” he demands. “I am glad you did not *nurse* him! Though he does bear *some* signs of me, yet you have *too much* blood in him!”

She stares at him. “What is *this—sport?*”

Leontes motions to the other women. “Bear the boy *hence*; he shall not come about her!—*away* with him!” Emilia, alarmed, hurries Mamillius off to his bedchamber. “And let her *‘sport’ herself* and *that she’s big with!*” growls the king. He glares at Hermione. “For ’tis *Polixenes* has made thee swell thus!”

She rises, shocked, but fiercely defiant. “But *I* say *he has not!*—*and*, I’ll be *sworn* you should *believe my saying*, howe’er you may lean to the nayward!”

Leontes turns to the noblemen and scoffs. “You, my lords, look on her—mark her well! Only set about to say, ‘She is a goodly lady,’ and the *justice* of your hearts will thereto add, ‘Tis a pity she’s not *honest* nor *honourable!*’ Praise her but for *this*, her without-door *form*—which, on my faith *deserves* high speech—and straight will follow a *shrug*—the *hm...* or *um...*—those petty *brands* that *calumny* doth use!

“When you have said ‘she’s *goodly*,’ these shrugs, these *hems* and *haws*, come *between* 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!*’

He can see their appalled looks. “*Oh*, I am *out of* what *Mercy* does!—for calumny will *sear* *Virtue itself!*” A victim’s anger over the humiliation he has imposed upon himself keeps him from seeing the irony.

Hermione is stricken—hurt and indignant. “Should a *villain* say so—the most *resplendent* villain in the *world*—he were *so much more* the villain! *You*, my lord, do but *mistake!*”

“*You* have mistook, my lady!—*Polixenes* for *Leontes!*”

“O thou... *thing!*—just *what* I’ll not call a creature of thy *place*,”—rank—“lest barbarism, making me the precedent, should use a like language for all degrees, and leave off mannerly distinguishment betwixt prince and beggar!

“I have said she’s an adulteress; I have said with whom. Moreover, she’s a *traitor!*—and *Camillo* is a *federary* with her—one who knows what she should *shame* to know *herself*: that with her most-vile *principal* she’s a *bed-server!*—even as bad as those whom vulgars give the bold’st titles!” The courtiers know he means *whore*. “And she was *privy* to this, their late *escape!*”

“*No*, by my *life!*” cries Hermione. “Privy to *none* of this!” She looks at him in dismay. “How it will *grieve* you, when you shall come to clearer knowledge, that you thus have published me! Gentle my lord, you scarce can *right me thoroughly* even by *saying you did mistake!*”

“*No!*” insists Leontes angrily. “If I mistake in those foundations which I build upon, the *earth* is not big enough to bear a school-boy’s *top!* *Away* with her! *To prison!*”

Seeing that the stunned noblemen are motionless, he bullies: “He who shall speak for *her* is fully as guilty as what he speaks of!”

Hermione struggles to understand. “There’s some ill planet now reigning! I must be patient till the heavens look down with an aspect more favourable!

“Good my lords, I am not prone to weeping, as our sex commonly are—the lack of which vain dew perchance shall dry your *pities*. But I have that honourable grief lodged *here*,” she says, a hand over her heart, “which *burns* worse than tears could *drown!*”

“I beseech you all, my lords, with thoughts so qualified as your charities shall best instruct you, *measure* me!” She turns from them in stately resignation. “And so may the king’s will be performed.”

The noblemen blanch at seeing the queen, so strong in her maternal fragility, being thus abused.

Leontes is irked by their inaction: “Shall I be *heard?*”

Hermione is steely. “Who is’t that goes with me? I beseech Your Highness that my women may be with me; for you see my plight requires it.” She tells her tearful waiting-women, “Do not weep, good fools, there is no cause!—when you shall know your mistress has *deservèd* prison, then *abound* in tears as it comes out. This action I now go on stems from *my better grace!*”—duty as a wife. “Adieu, my lord. I never wished to see you *sorry*; now I trust I *shall*.”

“My women, come; you have leave.” She leads them away.

Leontes shouts after them, “Go, do our bidding!—*hence!*”

One of the older lords appeals for moderation: “I *beseech* Your Highness, call the queen back again!”

Antigonus tells the king, “Be *certain* what you do, sir, lest your *justice* prove *violation*—in the which *three* great ones suffer: *yourself*, your *queen*, your *son!*”

An elderly nobleman is in tears. “For *her*, my lord, I dare *lay down my life*—and *will do*’t, sir, please you to accept it—that the queen is *spotless i’ the eyes of Heaven!* And *to you!*—I mean, in this of which you *accuse* her!”

Antigonus pleads vigorously: “If it prove she’s otherwise, I’ll keep to my *stables*—where I’ll lodge *my wife!* I’ll go in couples with her,”—stay yoked together, “and trust her no *farther* than I *see* and *feel* her!”

“For *every inch of woman in the world*—aye, every dram of woman’s flesh—is *false*, if *she* be!”

Leontes scowls. “Hold your peace!”

“Good my lord—” begins the graybeard.

Says Antigonus, “It is *for you* we speak, not for ourselves! You are *abusèd*—and by some *putter-on* who will be *dammèd* for’t! I would I *knew* the villain! I would *land-damn* him!”—inflict temporal punishment. He stammers in frustration: “Be *she* honour-flawed... I have three daughters: the eldest is eleven, the second nine, and third one five— If this prove true, *they’ll* pay for’t: by mine honour I’ll *clip ’em all!*—*fourteen* they shall not see, to bring *false generations!*”

“They are co-heirs, but I had rather thus *geld myself* than they should not produce *fair* issue!”

Leontes waves the lords away. “*Cease! No more!* You smell this business with a sense as cold as in a *dead man’s* nose! But *I* do see’t!—and *feel* it, as you feel doing *thus!*”—he claps his hands together sharply before his face. He shows his reddened palms. “And *see* withal the instruments that *feel!*”

But Antigonus shakes his head. “If it be so, we need no *grave* to bury *honesty!*—there’s not a *grain* of it to sweeten the face of *the whole dungy earth!*”

Leontes is angry. “*What? Lack I credit?*”

“I had rather you *did* lack it than *I*, my lord, upon *this* ground!” says the stern lord defiantly. “And more it would content me to have her *honour* true than your *suspicion!*—be blamèd for’t how you might!”

The king grows imperious: “Why, what need we commune with *you* on this?—rather *follow* our *forceful instigation!* Our prerogative calls not your *counsels*; our natural goodness simply imparts this! If you, either stupefied or *seeming* so through skill, cannot or will not relish the *truth* as we do, inform yourselves that we need *no more* of your advice! The matter—the *loss*, the *gain*, the *ordering* of’t—all is properly *ours!*”

Lord Antigonus foresees the scandal that will ensue. “But I wish, my liege, you had only in your *silent* judgment tried it, without more overt action!”

“How could *that* be?” demands Leontes. “Either thou art most *ignorant*, though *agèd*, or thou wert *born a fool!* Camillo’s *flight*—added to their familiarity, which was as *gross* as *conjecture* ever touchèd, which lacked nought for *confirmation* but *sight*, seeing all other circumstances made, up to the *deed*—doth push this proceeding *onward!*”

He raises a hand to bar further objection. “Yet, for a greater assurance—for in an act of this importance ’twere most piteous to be *wild*—I have dispatchèd, in post to sacred Delphos—to *Apollo’s* temple—Cleomenes and Dion, whom you know to be *stuffed* with sufficiency. Now, they will bring all from the *oracle*—whose spiritual counsel had, I shall stop or spur me.

“Have I done *well?*” he demands.

Grudgingly, Antigonus yields; there may yet be relief. “Well done, my lord.”

“Though *I* am satisfied, and need no more than what I *know*,” says the king, “yet shall the oracle give rest to the minds of *others*—such as he whose ignorant credulity will not come up to the *truth!*”

“Too have we thought it good that away from *our* free person she should be *confinèd*, lest treachery of the two fled hence be left for her to *perform!*”

“Come, follow us; we are to speak it in *public*, or this business will raze us all.”

As they head toward the castle’s entrance, Antigonus thinks, wryly, *Raise—to* laughter, *as I take it, if the good truth were known!*

Chapter Three Birth and Condemnation

Lady Paulina, wife of Lord Antigonus, comes down the stone steps into a dim, torch-lighted corridor deep within the old castle and approaches the jailer's dismal chambers; with her are her steward and two attendants.

"The keeper of the prison—call to him," Paulina tells the steward. "Let him have knowledge who I am." He bows, and walks past the low door of the subterranean dungeon.

Paulina thinks of poor Hermione. *Good lady, no court in Europe is too good for thee!—what dost thou then in prison?*

She sees her man return with the warden. "Now, good sir, you know me, do you not?"

The jailer bows, his iron keys jingling. "As a worthy lady, and one whom I much honour."

"Pray you, then, conduct me to the queen."

"I may not, madam," he says, wringing his hands apologetically. "To the contrary I have express commandment."

"Here's an age!—locking honesty and honour away from the access of gentle visitors! Is't lawful, pray you, to see her women? Any of them? Emilia?"

He nods. "So please you, madam, to put apart these your attendants, I shall bring Emilia forth."

"I pray now, call her." Paulina motions for the others to wait in the passage. "Withdraw yourselves."

The jailer looks down at his feet, discomfited. "And, madam, I must be present at your conference."

"Well, be't so, prithee." He bows and goes. "Here's such ado as to make *no* stain into a stain that *surpasses colouring!*" After a moment, the jailer brings Emilia to her. "Dear gentlewoman, how fares our gracious lady?"

Emilia is highly distraught. "As well as one so great and so *forlorn* may hold together! In her frights and griefs—of which never hath tender lady borne greater!—she has somewhat *before* her time *deliverèd!*"

Paulina stares, taken aback. "A boy?"

"A *daughter!*—and a *goodly* babe, vigorous and likely to live," Emilia reports. "The queen receives much comfort in't!—says, 'My poor prisoner, I am as innocent as *you!*'"

Paulina concurs: "I dare be sworn!" She imagines how conditions must be in the dank cells beyond. "These dangerous, unsafe *lunes* i' the king—*beshrew them!*—he must be *told* of't—and he *shall!*" she cries. "The office becomes a *woman* best; I'll take't upon me!

"If I prove *honey*-mouthed, let my *tongue blister*, and never be the trumpet any more to my *red-lookèd anger!*"

"Pray you, Emilia, commend my best obedience to the queen. I'll undertake to be her advocate to the loudest, and if she dares trust me with her little babe, I'll show't to the king.

"We do not know how he may soften at the sight o' the child. Often the silence of pure innocence persuades when speaking fails."

Emilia is hopeful. "Most worthy madam, your honour and your goodness are so evident that your free undertaking cannot fail to bring a thriving issue! There is no other lady living so meet for this great errand!

"Please it Your Ladyship, I'll immediately visit the next room to acquaint the queen with your most noble offer! *She* but today stammered this design!—but durst not tempt a minister of honour, lest he should be denied...."

Paulina's face reveals determination. "Tell her, Emilia. I'll *use* that tongue I have! If *wit* flow from it as boldness from my *heart*, let it not be doubted I shall do some good!"

Emilia curtsays. "Now be you *blest* for it! I'll to the queen. Please you, come somewhat nearer." She hurries back to Hermione's cell.

The jailer is apprehensive. "Madam, if't please the queen to send the babe, I know not what I shall incur to let it *pass*, having no warrant!"

"You need not fear it, sir," Paulina assures him. "This child was prisoner to the *womb*, and is by law and process of great *Nature* thence freed and enfranchisèd—not a party to the anger of the king, nor guilty of the trespass of the queen—as if any *be!*"

The jailer nods. "I do believe it."

"Do not fear you," says Paulina. "Upon mine honour, I will stand betwixt you and danger."

King Leontes paces, alone, ruminating vengefully about his festering humiliation. *Nor night nor day, no rest! It is but weakness to bear the matter thus, mere weakness!*

His impotent sleeplessness infuriates him. *If only the cause were not in being!—part o' the cause, she, the adulteress—for the harlot king is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank and level of my brain, plot-proof!*

But she I can hook to me! Say that she were gone—given to the fire!—half of my rest might come to me again.

He summons whatever servant attends in the royal bedchambers. "Who's there?"

The man comes to him. "My lord?"

"How does the boy?" Mamillius has been bedridden with fever.

"He took good rest tonight; 'tis hoped his sickness is dischargèd."

"You see his *nobleness*: perceiving the dishonour of his *mother*, he straight declined, drooped, took it deeply, fastened and fixed the shame of it *in himself!*—threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep, and downright languished," moans Leontes. "Leave me here alone; go, see how he fares."

The elderly servant doubts that *dishonor* is what afflicts a fearful seven-year-old who has been forbidden to see his imprisoned mother; but he bows, silently, and leaves.

Leontes paces—and again pictures Polixenes. *Fie, fie! no thought of him!—my revenges that way recoil upon me! In himself he's too mighty! Then in his parties, his alliances, let him be—until a time that may serve. As for present vengeance, take it on her! Camillo and Polixenes laugh at me, make their pastime of my sorrow! They would not laugh if I could reach them!—nor shall she, within my power!*

He hears a disturbance from beyond a closed door.

- A man insists, "You must not enter!"

- Lady Paulina's voice replies sharply: "Nay, rather, good my lords, be *seconds* to me! Fear you more his tyrannous passion than *for the queen's life?*—alas, a gracious, *innocent soul*—more *free* than *he is jealous!*"

- "That's *enough!*" says her husband, Lord Antigonus.

- "Madam, he hath not *slept* tonight—*commanded* that none should come at him!" says a servant angrily.

- "Not so *hot*, good sir!" counters Paulina. "*I* come to *bring* him sleep! 'Tis such as *you*—who creep by him like shadows, and do *sigh* at each of his needless *hevings*—such as you *nourish* the *cause* of his awaking! *I* do come with words as *medicinal* as *true*, *honest* as either, to *purge* him of the distemper that presses him from sleep!"

Leontes, hearing the contention, is annoyed; he calls, "Whose *noise* there, *ho?*"

The door flies open. Says Paulina disdainfully, striding into the room, "No noise, my lord, but needful *conference* with some of Your Highness's *flatterers!*" She holds the king's infant daughter, and is followed by her husband and two other lords.

Leontes is angry. "*How? Away* with that audacious lady! Antigonus, I charged thee that she should not come about me! I knew she would—"

"*I told her so, my lord!*" says Antigonus. "On *your* displeasure's peril, and on *mine*, she should not visit you!"

"What?—canst not rule her?" demands Leontes contemptuously.

"From all *dishonesty* he *can*," says Paulina. "In *this*—unless he take the course that *you* have done—*commit* me for committing *honour!*—trust it, he shall *not* rule me!"

Antigonus throws up his hands: "Now you *hear!* Look you, when she will take the reins, I let her *run!*—she'll not stumble!"

Paulina strides to Leontes—who turns away. "Good my liege, I *do* come, and I beseech you to *hear* me!—who profess myself *your loyal servant*, your *physician*, your most obedient *counsellor*—yet one who dares, in confronting your evils, to appear less so than such of these who most *seem* yours!

"You see I come from your good queen—"

"*Good queen?*" growls Leontes.

"*Good queen, my lord, good queen!*" cries Paulina angrily. "I say *good queen!*—and would by *combat* make her good"—fight to prove her honor—"if were I a *man!*—even the *worst* among you!" The listening noblemen flush.

Leontes motions to the others. "Force her hence."

Paulina faces them, cradles the baby in her left arm, and raises the flaring nails of her right hand. "Let him that makes but trifles of his *eyes* first lay hand on me!" She turns to the king. "Of mine *own* accord I'll go—but *first* I'll do my *errand!*

"The *good* queen—for she *is* good!—hath brought you forth a *daughter*—here 'tis—and commends it to your blessing." Gently, she lays the swaddled child on the floor before him.

"*Out!*" cries Leontes. "A *man-like witch!* Hence with her, *out o' doors!* A most *intelligencing bawd!*"—spying go-between.

"*Not so!* I am as *ignorant* in that as *you* in so entitling me!" retorts Paulina, "and no less *honest* than *you* are *mad!*—which I'll warrant is enough, as *this* world goes, to *pass* for honest!"

"*Traitors!* Will you not push her out?" demands Leontes. "Give *her* the bastard!" He glares at Antigonus. "Thou *dotard!*—thou art *woman-tinèd*—*unroostered* by thy Dame Hen here! Take up the bastard! *Take 't up*, I say—give 't to thy *crone!*"

Paulina warns her husband: "*Forever unvenerable be thy hands* if thou takest up the princess under that forcèd baseness which he has put upon her!"

Leontes scowls. "He dreads his *wife.*"

"So I would *you* did," cries Paulina. "Then 'twere past all doubt you'd *call your children yours!*"

Leontes frowns. "A nest of *traitors!*"

Antigonus protests: "*I am none*, by this good light!"

Paulina tells the noblemen, "Nor *I!*—nor any but *one* that's here—and that's *himself!* For *he* the sacred honour of himself, his queen, his hopeful son, his babe, *betrays to slander*, whose sting is sharper than the sword's!

"If he *wills* not at once to remove the root of his opinion—which is *rotten* as ever oak or stone was *sound!*—he cannot be *compelled* to 't. And as his case now stands, it is *accurst!*"

"A *callat* of *boundless* tongue!" cries Leontes, "who late hath beaten her *husband* and now *baits me!*" He gestures toward the infant. "This brat is none of *mine!*—it is the issue of *Polixenes!* Hence with it!—and, together with the mother, *commit them to the fire!*"

The courtiers gape.

Paulina stands unmoved. "It *is* yours!—but we might lay the old proverb to your charge: for being like *you*, 'tis so much the worse!" She points to the sleeping baby. "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 valleys, the dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles, the very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger!

“And *thou*, good goddess *Nature*, who hast made it so like to him that begot it, if thou hast the ordering of the *mind*, too, amongst all colours allow more *yellow* in’t!—lest Hermione suspect as *he* does: that her children are not her *husband’s!*”—lacking his jaundiced outlook.

Leontes fumes, staring at Antigonus. “A *gross hag!*—and *thou*, *scoundrel*, who wilt not *stay her tongue*, art worthy to be *hanged!*”

Antigonus shakes his head. “Hang all the husbands that cannot do *that* feat, you’ll leave yourself hardly one subject!”

“Once more: *take her hence!*” demands the king.

Paulina sneers: “A most *unworthy* and *unnatural* lord, who can do no more than *thus!*”

Leontes shouts at her: “I’ll *have thee burnt!*”

“*I care not!* It is an heretic who *makes* the fire, not she who *burns* in’t! I’ll not *call* you ‘tyrant’—but this *most cruel usage* of your queen—unable to produce in accusation more than *your own weak-hinged fantasy*—somewhat *savours* of *tyranny!*—and will reveal you as *scandalous*—*yea, ignoble!*—to the *world!*”

Leontes is furious with the lords. “On your *allegiance*, *out of this chamber with her!*”

“Were I a *tyrant*, where were her *life?*—she’d dare not *call* me so, even if she did know me one! *Away with her!*”

Antigonus starts to force her from the room.

“I pray you, do not *push* me!” she insists, shoving him away. “I’ll be gone.” She tells Leontes, “*Look* at your babe, my lord!—’tis *yours!* May Jove send her a *better* guiding spirit!

“What needs these *hands?*” she protests, as her husband compels her to go. Lady Paulina is disgusted with the entire court. “You who are thus so *tender* with his *follies* will never do him *good*—*not one of you!*”

“Farewell; we are gone.”

Leontes rages at her husband: “*Thou, traitor*, hast *set on* thy wife to this!

“*My child? Away* with’t!” The king needs to punish someone. “And *thou*, that hast a heart so tending toward it, take it hence!—and see it *instantly consumed in fire!*—even *thou*, and none *but* thou! Take it up straight!”

Antigonus kneels to gather up the pink bundle. He rises, and as he smooths her blanket, smiles down at the child.

Says Leontes, “Within this hour bring me word ’tis *done!*—and by *good testimony*, or I’ll seize thy *life!*—with whatever *else* thou call’st thine!

“If thou refuse and wilt encounter with my wrath, *say* so!—the bastard’s brains with *these* my proper hands shall I *dash out!* *Go!*—*take it to the fire!*—for thou set’st on thy wife!”

“I did *not*, sir!” cries Antigonus. “These lords, my noble fellows, if they please, can clear me of it!”

“*We can!*” a white-haired nobleman assures the king as the others nod. “My royal liege, he is not guilty of her coming hither!”

“*You’re liars all!*”

“I *beseech* Your Highness, give us better *credit!*” pleads the old lord, kneeling. “We have always served you *truly!*—and beseech you so to *esteem* us! And on our knees we beg, as recompense of our dear services, past and to come, that you do *change this purpose!*—which being so *horrible*, so *bloody*, must lead on to some *foul issue!*”

“We all kneel!” And they do.

“Am I a feather for each *wind* that *blows?*” Leontes steps toward Antigonus and looks at the peaceful infant’s face. “Shall I live on to see this *bastard* kneel—and call me *Father?* Better *burn* it now than *curse* it *then!*”

Still, as looks down at her he cannot help wavering. After a moment he swallows. “But let it be; let it live.”

Then, as he gazes at Antigonus, his anger returns. “It shall *not*, neither! *You*, sir, come you hither; *you* that with Lady *Cackle*, your *midwife*, have been so *tenderly officious* to save this

bastard's life—for 'tis a bastard as surely as this beard's grey!—what will you *venture* to save this brat's life?"

"*Anything*, my lord, that my ability may undergo!—and *nobleness* impose," says Antigonus proudly. "At least *thus* much: I'll pawn the little *blood* which I have left to save the innocent! *Anything possible!*"

"It shall be possible," mutters Leontes, drawing his blade. "Swear by this sword thou wilt perform my bidding."

Antigonus touches the cross-shaped hilt. "I *will*, my lord!"

Leontes sheathes the weapon. "*Mark*—and see'st thou *perform* it! For the failure of any point in't shall not only be death to *thyself* but to thy lewd-tongued *wife*, who, for this time, we pardon.

"We enjoin thee, as thou art liege-man to us, that thou carry this female bastard hence, and that thou bear it to some remote and deserted place quite out of our dominions—and that there thou *leave* it, without further mercy, to its *own* protection, and favour of the *climate!*"

"As by *strange* fortune it came to us, I do in justice charge thee—on thy soul's peril and thy body's torture!—that thou *commend* it strangely—to some place where chance may *nurse* or *end* it.

"*Take it away!*"

Says Antigonus, tears in his eyes, "I swear to do this, though immediate *death* had been more *merciful!*"

"Come on, poor babe. May some powerful spirit instruct the hawks and ravens to be thy nurses. *Wolves* and *bears*, they say, casting their *savageness* aside, have done like offices out of *pity*," he says, with a pointed glance at Leontes.

Antigonus now regards the king sadly. "Sir, be prosperous in more than *this* deed does require." He looks at the newborn in his arms. "And may *blessing* against this cruelty fight on *thy* side, poor thing, condemnèd to loss." He leaves the room.

The other nobles stand motionless, glum and silent—but with pleading looks.

"*No!*—I'll not rear *another's* issue!" cries Leontes adamantly.

A servant hurries in from the corridor. "Please it Your Highness, riders from those you sent to the *oracle* have come this hour! Cleomenes and Dion, being well arrivèd from Delphos, are both landed, and are on their way to the court!"

"So please you, sir, their speed hath been beyond account!" says the elderly lord, amazed.

Leontes nods. "Twenty-three days they have been absent. 'Tis *good speed*—foretells that great *Apollo* will have the *truth* of this appear *suddenly!*"

"Prepare you, lords! Summon a session, so that we may *arraign* our most disloyal lady. For, as she hath 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!*"

Gulls wheel and cry in the clear sky over the calm Ionian Sea, and a long, sleek galley now lies at anchor on Sicilia's eastern coast. Immediately after it landed, two noblemen dispatched messengers to notify the king, at the castle in the valley two leagues away, of their imminent arrival at his court.

They have voyaged swiftly to and from Greece to petition at the ancient shrine of a world-renowned oracle, and their hasty visit in Delphi proved enjoyable.

Says Lord Cleomenes, as they walk briskly along the pebbled shore, "The climate's delicate, the air most sweet, fertile the isle—the *temple* much surpassing the common praise it bears!"

Lord Dion remembers the priests. "*I* shall report, for most it caught me, the *celestial robes*—methinks I so should term them—and the *reverence* of the grave wearers!"

"Oh, the *sacrifice!*—how ceremonious, solemn and unearthly it was i' the offering!"

"And, after all, the bursting, ear-deafening *voice of the oracle*, akin to *Jove's thunder!*—so surprised my sense that I was *nothing!*" says Cleomenes.

Dion is eager to deliver the written rulings provided by the Delphic sacristan. “If the event of the journey prove as successful for the queen—oh, *be’t* so!—as it hath been to us rare, pleasant, and speedy, the time is worth the use of’t!”

“May great Apollo turn all to the best!” says Cleomenes. “Those proclamations, *forcing faults* upon Hermione, I little like!”

As they hurry toward the stable at the south end of the wharf, Dion touches the leather pouch hanging at his side. “The oracle is thus by Apollo’s great divine sealed up; when the contents shall be disclosed, something *rare* will even then rush to knowledge!

“The violent carriage of it will *clear* or *end* the business!

“Go! Fresh horses!” he tells an attendant, who runs on ahead. “And *gracious* be the issue!”

Chapter Four A Day of Judgment

King Leontes solemnly addresses the Court of Justice, a panel comprising ten lords he has summoned to the palace. “This session, to our great grief we pronounce, *pushes ’gainst our heart*: the party tried, the daughter of a king, our wife, and one by us *too much beloved*.”

“Let us be cleared of being *tyrannous*, since we so openly proceed in *justice*, which shall have due course—even to the *guilt* and the *purgation*!

“Produce the prisoner.”

An officer calls toward a side room where the jailer waits: “It is his highness’ pleasure that the queen appear in person here in court.” He turns to the hall, crowded with nobles and courtiers, with their attendants and other commoners. “Silence!”

Queen Hermione is led in, guarded by two stolid soldiers. Lady Paulina follows, with gentlewomen attending her and the queen.

“Read the indictment,” says Leontes.

The officer of the guard holds up a scroll. “Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, King of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned for *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 practise whereof being by circumstances partly laid open, 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 faces the king. “Since what I am to say must be that which *contradicts* thine accusation, and the testimony on my part being no other but what comes *from myself*, it shall scarce boot me to *say* ‘not guilty’—mine integrity being accounted *falsely*, it shall even as I express it be so received.

“But *hear this*: if powers *divine* behold our human actions—as they *do!*—then doubt not but that *innocence* shall make false accusation *blush*—and make *tyranny* tremble at *patience*.

“*You* best know, my lord, who least will *seem* to do so, that my past life hath been *as continent, as chaste, as true*, as I am now *unhappy!*—which is more than a stage story could pattern, though devised and played to *take spectators!*

“For *behold* me!—a fellow of the royal bed, who owns 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!*—before whomever pleases to come and hear!”

She speaks proudly: “As for *life*, I prize it as I would weigh *grief*—sparely. But as for *honour*, ’tis bequeathèd from *me* to *mine*—and for only *that* I stand!

“I appeal to your own awareness, sir, of how well I was in your *grace* before Polixenes came to your court—and of how I *merited to be so!*

“*Since* he came, for what *encounter un-occurrent* have I been constrained to appear thus?

“If one *jot* beyond the bound of honour, either in act or will, I that way inclined, hardened be the hearts of all that hear me, and may my near’st of kin cry ‘*Fie!*’ upon my *grave!*”

Leontes sneers. “I ne’er heard yet that any of these bolder voices had less impudence in *gainsaying* what they did than in *performing* it first!”

“That’s true enough—through ’tis a saying, sir, not due to *me!*”

“You will not *confess* it!”

“What comes to me in *name* of more fault than I am mistress of, I must acknowledge *not at all!*”

“As for Polixenes, with whom I am accused, I do confess I loved him as in *honour* was requirèd, with such a kind of love as might *become* a lady like me—with a love even such as *yourself commanded!*—so, and *no other!* Which *not* to have done, I think, had been in me both disobedience and ingratitude to you, and toward your friend from infancy—whose love *he* had freely spoken, ever since he *could* speak, that it was *yours!*”

“As for *conspiracy*, I know not how it tastes—though it now be dished up for me to try! All I *know* of it is that *Camillo was an honest man*; as to *why* he left your court, the gods themselves, knowing no more than I, are ignorant!”

Leontes shakes his head. “You *knew* of his departure—and you know what you have underta’en to *do* in’s absence!”

“Sir, you speak a *language* that I *understand not!* My *life*—and I lay it down—stands as the target of your *dreams!*”

“Your *actions* are my ‘dreams!’” cries Leontes angrily. “You *had a bastard* by Polixenes—and I but *dreamed* it? You were *past all shame!*—those of *your crime are* so!—*past all truth!*—which to deny *worries*, more than it *avails!*”

“As thy *brat* hath been cast out by itself, no *father* owning it—which is, indeed, more criminal in *thee* than it!—so *thou* shalt feel our justice, in whose *easiest* passage look for no less than *death!*”

Hermione dismisses his rage. “Sir, spare your threats!—the bug which you would fright me with *I seek!* Life cannot be commodious to me: the crown and comfort of my life, your *favour*, I do give up as *lost*—for I do feel it gone, but know not how it went.

“My second joy, and first fruit of my body—from his presence I am *barrèd*, like one *infectious!*”

“My *third* comfort, starrèd most unluckily, is dragged from my breast, the innocent milk in its most innocent mouth, out to *murder!*”

“My *self* on every post proclaimed a *strumpet!* With *immense hatred*, denied the child-bed privilege which belongs to women of all manner!”—nursing her infant. “Lastly, hurried here to this place i’ the open air before I have gotten back even limited strength!

“Now, my liege, *tell* me: what *blessings* have I here *alive* that should make me fear to *die?*”

“Therefore proceed.

“But yet hear *this!*” she cries, facing him squarely. “Mistake me not; *life* I prize not a straw—but mine *honour* I would *free!* If I shall be condemned upon *surmises*, all proofs sleeping else but what *your jealousies* awake, I tell you ’tis *severity*, and not *law!*”

She turns to the noble jurors. “Your Honours all, I do refer me to the *oracle!*—*Apollo* be my judge!”

The presiding lord nods to her. “This your request is altogether *just*. Therefore bring forth, and in *Apollo’s* name, his oracle.”

Two soldiers go out into the corridor.

“The Emperor of Russia was my *father,*” says Hermione sorrowfully. “Oh, that he were alive, and here beholding his daughter’s trial!—that he did but see the fullness of my misery—yet with eyes of *pity*, not *revenge.*”

The soldiers return with two Sicilian lords.

The captain of the guard approaches the noblemen. “You here shall swear, upon this sword of justice, that you, Cleomenes and Dion, have been both at *Delphos*, and from thence have brought the sealed-up oracle, delivered by the hand of *great Apollo’s priest*; and that since then you have not dared to break the holy seal, nor read the secrets in’t.”

“All this we swear,” the lords say together, each touching the cross of the sword’s hilt.

The king motions for them to proceed. “Break up the seals and read.” The red wax is cracked, and the open document is handed to the officer.

He reads aloud—smiling: “Hermione is *chaste*; Polixenes *blameless*; Camillo a *true* subject; Leontes a *jealous tyrant*; his innocent babe *truly* begotten!

“And the king shall live *without an heir*, if that which is lost be not found.”

The graybeard lord presiding over the panel beams. “Now *blessèd* be the great Apollo!”

Hermione looks upward. “*Praisèd!*”

The king glowers. “Hast thou read *truly*?”

“*Aye*, my lord, even so as it is here set down.”

Leontes is furious. “There *is no truth at all* i’ the oracle! The sessions shall proceed! This is *sheer falsehood!*”

But now a servant of the royal household runs into the hall, calling, “My lord the *king, the king—*”

“What is *this* business?” demands Leontes.

“Oh, sir, I shall be *hated* to *report* it!” says the man, in tears. “The *prince—your son—* from merely imagined fear of the queen’s doom, is gone!”

“What? *Gone?*”

“Is *dead!*”

Leontes pales, staggered. “Apollo is *angry!*—and the heavens themselves do strike at my injustice!” He sees the queen faint and fall to the floor. “How now, there?”

Lady Paulina rushes to her and grasps her hand; she kneels beside Hermione, searching for signs of life. “This news is *mortal* to the *queen!*” she cries to the court. “Look down, and see what *Death* is doing!”

Leontes is growing frantic. “Take her hence! Her heart is but *o’erchargèd*—she will *recover!*”

“I have too much believed *mine own suspicion!*”

“I *beseech* you, tenderly apply to her some *remedies* for *life!*”

Paulina and the waiting-gentlewomen follow the officers who carefully bear the queen, on a narrow litter, away from the gray stone hall.

King Leontes falls to his knees, looking upward. “Apollo, *pardon* my great profaneness ’gainst thine oracle!” he pleads. “I’ll *reconcile* me to Polixenes!—*woo my queen anew!*—*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 Camillo for the minister to *poison* my friend Polixenes!” he confesses, before the judges, courtiers and commoners.

He recalls with horror: “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! Not *doing* it, and being thus *done*, he—most humane and filled with *honour*—to my kingly guest unclasped my practise, quit his fortunes here, which you knew great, and to the hazard of all *incertainties* himself commended, no richer than his *honour!*”

“How he glisters thorough my *rust!* And how his *pity* does my deeds make the blacker!”

Lady Paulina returns, highly distraught. “*Woe the while!*” she wails. “Oh, cut my lace, lest rending it I break my *heart* too!”

“What *fit* is *this*, good lady?” asks the chief judge.

Paulina confronts Leontes. “What studièd *torments, tyrant*, hast for me?” she shrieks. “What *wheels? Racks? Fires?* What *flaying? Boiling* in lead or *oils?* What old or newer torture must I receive?—whose every *word* deserves to taste of thy *most worst!*”

“Thy *tyranny*, together working with thy *jealousies—fantasies* too weak for *boys*, too green and idle for girls of *nine!*—oh, *think* what they have *done!*—and then *run mad!*—indeed, *stark mad!*

“For all thy *by-gone* fooleries were but *spices!*

“That thou betrayedst *Polixenes*, ’twas *nothing!*—that did but show thee to be a *fool—*inconstant and *damnably ingrateful!*

“Nor was’t much thou wouldst have poisoned good *Camillo’s* honour, *to have him kill a king!*

“*Poor* trespasses, with more *monstrous* standing by!—whereof I reckon the casting forth to crows of thy *baby daughter* to be or *little* or *none!*—though a *devil* would have *given up water* in the *fire* ere he’d done’t!

“Nor is’t *directly* laid to thee, the death of the *young prince*—whose honourable thoughts, too high for one so tender, *cleft the heart* that could perceive how a *gross and foolish sire* blemished his *gracious mother!* No, that is not laid to *thy* answer!

“But *the last!*—O lords, when I have spoken, cry *woe!*

“The queen, the *queen*—the sweet’st, dear’st creature, is *dead!*—and *vengeance* for it is not yet droppèd down!”

The white-haired lord gasps, appalled by the news. “The higher powers forbid!”

“I say *she’s dead!* I’ll *swear’t!* If word nor *oath* prevail, go and *see!* If you can find tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye—heat outward or breath within—I’ll serve *you* as I would do the *gods!*”

She steps toward the kneeling King Leontes. “But *oh*, thou *tyrant*, do not *repent* these things!—they are heavier than all *thy woe* could stir!—a *thousand* kneelings for *ten thousand years*, together with *fasting naked* upon a barren mountain, and ever in *perpetual winter storm*, could not move the gods to *look* the way thou wert!

“Therefore betake thee to *nothing but despair!*”

“Go on, *go on!*” groans Leontes, crushed, his head hanging low. “Thou canst not speak too much!—I have deserved for *all* tongues to talk their *bitterest!*”

But the judge motions Paulina away. “Say no more! Howe’er the business goes, you have made a *fault* in the boldness of your speech!”

Livid, she regards him with sarcasm. “Oh, I am *sorry* for’t!” She rails at the other lords of the court: “All faults that *I* do make—when I come to *know* them!—I shall *repent*. Alas, I have *showed* too much the rashness of a *woman!*

“He is *touchèd*—to the *noble* heart!” She turns to the king, her face distorted by anger. “What’s gone, and what’s past help, *should* be past grief! Do not receive affliction at *my* petition!—I beseech you, rather let *me* be punished, who have put you in mind of what you would rather *forget!*

“Now, good my liege—*sir!*—*royal* sir!—forgive a foolish *woman!*

“The love I bore your queen—” She strikes her forehead: “*Lo!*—*fool* again! I’ll speak of *her* no more!—nor of your *children!*

“I’ll not remember, before you, my *own* lord—who is *lost too!*

“Take your *patience* to you, and I’ll say *nothing!*”

Leontes looks up at her, tears flowing. “Thou didst speak most *well* when speaking but the *truth!*—which I can *perceive* is much harsher than being *pitied* by *thee!*” He sobs, hands held to his head. Then his arms fall, hanging at his sides. He tells the court officers, “Prithee, take me to the dead bodies of my queen and son.” The soldiers help him to rise.

His eyes are swollen from weeping. “One grave shall be for both.

“Over them shall the *causes* of their death appear—unto *my shame perpetual!*

“Once each day I’ll visit the chapel where they lie, and *shedding tears* there shall be my recreation! So long as nature will endure this exercise, so long I vow to use it daily!

“Come, and lead me unto these sorrows....”

Chapter Five Treasures Found

In a small boat approaching the windy, rock-strewn coast of the northeastern Adriatic, a worried sea captain looks ahead as two of his sailors, rowing hard in choppy water, struggle against the wind to reach the shore. With them is the grizzled Lord Antigonus, holding a blanketed infant wrapped in a lady's fine cloak; a wooden chest lies at his feet.

As the seamen secure the boat, the Sicilian nobleman climbs an eroding hillside to the grassy plain above. He looks down at the waves now creeping up along the barren strand. "Our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia. Thou art perfected, then," he assures the captain, who had questioned their recently revised destination; his assignment has been accomplished.

"Aye, my lord—but I fear we have landed in ill time!" says the captain, his voice raised against the growing gusts. He sets the heavy chest down near a patch of brush in a thin stand of old pine. "The skies look grimly, and threaten present blusters! My conscience says the heavens are *angry* with what we have to do, and *frown* upon us!"

"Their sacred wills be done," murmurs Antigonus. "Go, get aboard; look to thy bark. I'll not be long before I call upon thee."

"Make your best haste, and go not too far i' the land!" the mariner warns. "'Tis like to be loud weather; besides, this place is famous for the creatures of prey that keep upon't!"

Antigonus nods. "Go thou away; I'll follow instantly."

The captain looks sadly at the tiny child. "I am glad at heart to be so rid o' the business!" He goes back down to his men.

Antigonus kneels. "Come, poor babe." He lays the infant on a soft bed of brown pine-needles beneath some sheltering boughs.

"I have heard, but not believed, that the spirits o' the dead may walk again. If such thing be, *thy mother* appeared to me last night!—for ne'er was a *dream* so like a *waking*!"

"To me comes a creature, her head sometimes tilted to one side, some to another—I never saw a vessel of like *sorrow*!—or one so *becoming*!—in robes pure white, like very *sanctity*, she did approach in my cabin, where I lay, thrice bowed before me—then gaped, as if to begin some speech.

"Her eyes became two spouts; their fury spent, anon did this break-from her: 'Good Antigonus, since fate, against thy better disposition, but in accord with thine oath, hath made thy person the thrower-out of my poor babe, places *remote enough* are in *Bohemia*—*there* weep, and leave it crying. And, for the babe is counted lost forever, *Perdita*, 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 *moans*, she *melted into air*!"

"Affrighted much, I did in time collect myself—and thought this was *so*, and no *slumber*!"

He muses. *I do believe Hermione hath sufferèd death, and that, this being indeed the issue of King Polixenes, Apollo would it should here be laid, for either life or death upon the earth of its right father.*

Dreams are toys... yet for this once—yea, superstitiously—I will be squarèd with this one!

He smooths the blanket tenderly. "Blossom, speed thee well! There lie—and there thy description," he says, placing beside her a leather-bound packet of letters he wrote during the voyage; they reveal only that Perdita is the daughter a foreign queen, and that treasure comes with her. He tugs the wooden box, hastily filled at home from his own wealth, to slide it next to the baby. "There are these, which may, if Fortune please, both sustain thee, pretty, and ever remain thine."

Antigonus hears thunder. “The storm begins, poor wretch, who for thy *mother’s* fault art thus exposèd to loss and what may follow! Weep I cannot, but my heart bleeds; and most accursèd am I to be by oath enjoined to *this!* Farewell!”

He regards the dark skies. “The day frowns more and more! Thou’rt likely to have a lullaby too rough! I never saw the heavens so dim by day!”

He rises, and turns toward the shore. Suddenly he hears a loud, guttural growl. “A savage clamour!” he mutters. “Well may I get aboard!”—and then he spots, already loping heavily toward him, the low, sinister shape of a large brown bear.

The chase is on! he thinks, clambering in terror down the rough hillside, with the big beast snarling in close pursuit. *I am gone forever!*

A poor Bohemian shepherd leans against his tall staff, weary after an afternoon of futile searching among the hills.

I would there were no age between ten-and-three and twenty, he thinks sourly, *or that youth would sleep out the rest! For there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, and fighting!*

His son, a lad of ten, has come along today to help him search; just now he darted away to a cliff to watch, looking out over the sea, as a dark storm moves toward them.

But older boys are the source of the shepherd’s annoyance. *Hark you now, would any but these boiled-brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt in this weather? They have scared away two of my best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find than the master!*

If anywhere I’ll have them, ’tis by the seaside, grazing in ivy....

Meandering along the line of hills sloping down toward shore, looking for his sheep, he spots an anomaly: bright green fabric among some straggling brush. He looks upward. *Good luck, an’t be thy will!*

What have we here! Mercy on ’s, a barne, a very pretty barne! A boy or a girl, I wonder? He crouches to peer at Perdita. A pretty one; a very pretty one!

Surely some escape!—though I am not bookish, yet I can read ‘waiting-gentlewoman’ in the ’scape. He has heard about abandonment of out-of-wedlock offspring. *This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work! They who begot this were warmer than the poor thing is here!*

I’ll take it up for pity. He holds the quiet child, sated with cow’s milk while aboard the galley. The shepherd sits down to rest on a span of rock. *Yet I’ll tarry till my son come; he hallooed but even now.*

“*Woh-a, ho ho-a!*” he calls.

“*Halloh-a, ho-a!*” cries the tall boy, coming up the rise toward him.

“What, art so near?” He motions his son forward. “If thou’lt see a thing to talk *on* when thou art dead and rotten, come hither!” But now he perceives that the lad is perturbed. “What *ailest* thou, man?”

“I have seen *two* such *sights!*—on sea and on land!—” He shakes his head: “But I am not able to say it *is* a sea, for it is now the *sky!*—betwixt swell and firmament you cannot thrust a bodkin’s point!”

“Why, boy, how is that?”

“I would you did but *see* how it *chafes*, how it *rages*, how it takes up the shore! But that’s not the *fright!*—

“*Oh*, the most *piteous* *cries* of the *poor souls!* Sometimes seeing ’em, then *not* seeing ’em!—now the ship boring the moon with her main-mast!—and anon *swallowed* in yest and froth!—as if you’d tossed a *cork* into a barrel of *wine!*

“And then for the *land-service!*—to see how the *bear* tore out his *shoulder-bone!*—hear how he cried to me for *help!*—said his name was *Antigonus*, a nobleman!

“But, to make an end of the *ship*: seeing how the sea *flap-dragoned* it!”—gulped it down.
“First how the poor souls roared, and the sea *mocked* them!

“Then how the poor *gentleman* roared, and the bear mocked *him!*—*both* roaring louder than the sea or weather!”

The shepherd stares, wide-eyed. “*Name of Mercy!*—when was *this*, boy?”

“*Now, now!*—I have not *blinked* 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!*”

The shepherd looks seaward. “Would I had been by, to have helped the poor man!”

The boy feels frustration. “*I* would you had been by the *ship’s* side, to have helped her where your charity would have *lacked footing!*”—as if he’d be more help with the bear.

“Heavy matters! Heavy matters,” moans the shepherd, cradling the baby. “But look thee *here*, boy! Now bless thyself: *thou* mettest with things *dying*, *I* with things *new-born!* Here’s a sight for thee! Look thee—a bearing-cloth for a *squire’s* child!”

The boy smiles to see the infant’s solemn serenity despite the howling weather.

The shepherd moves to the wooden chest. “Look thee *here!*—take up, *take up*, boy!—*open’t!* So let’s see!

“It was told me I should be made rich by the fairies!” He looks at the baby. “This is some *changeling!*

“Open’t! What’s within, boy?”

The lad pulls back the iron hasp and lifts the hinged wooden cover; he is startled—and delighted. “You’re *a-made*, old man!” he cries. “If the sins of your *youth* are forgiven you, you’re *to live well!* Gold! *All gold!*”

But the shepherd is wary. “This is *fairy* gold, boy, and ’twill prove so! Up with’t, keep it close! Home, *home* by the *nearest way!* We are lucky, boy—but to be so *still* requires nothing but *secrecy!* Let my sheep go! Come, good boy, the shortest way *home!*”

But his young son turns toward the sea. “Go you with your foundling. I’ll see if the bear be gone from the gentleman, and how much it hath eaten; they are never vicious but when they are hungry.

“If there be any of him left, I’ll bury it.”

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

“Marry, will I.” The boy regards his father. “And you shall help to put him i’ the ground.”

The shepherd nods; he will return. “’Tis a *lucky* day, boy; and we’ll do *good deeds* on’t!”

Chapter Six In Fair Bohemia

Behold, in a shimmering twilight, an ethereal image: a white-haired man, at once both coming and going—and holding a tall hour-glass.

“I who please some, *try* all, in both joy and terror, good and bad—who takes and *unfolds* error—*now* take it upon me, under the name of *Time*, to *use my wings!*

“My passage is swift; impute it not to me a crime that I slide o’er *sixteen years*, and leave untrod the growth of that wide gap, since it is in *my* power to *o’erthrow* law, and in one self-born hour to supplant an o’erwhelmèd *custom!*

“*The same* am *I*—from ere ancient’st order that *was*, to what is *now* receivèd. I was *witness* to the times that brought them in; so shall I be to the freshest things now reigning—then make the glistening of this present as stale as my *tale* now seems within it.

“So let me pass! Your patience this allowing, I turn my glass,”—he does so, “and give my scene such *growing* as if you had *slept!*—leaving behind Leontes and the effects of his absurd jealousies—so *grievous* that he *shuts himself away!*

“Imagine, gentle spectator, that now I may be in fair *Bohemia*....

“And remember well what is to be noted: the *son* o’ the *king* I now name to you *Florizel*—and with speed so pacèd do speak of *Perdita*, now grown to a *grace* equal with *wonder*!

“What of her ensues I will not prophesy; let *Time*’s news be known when ’tis brought forth!

“A *shepherd*’s daughter, and what to her adheres, which here follows after, is the argument of *Time*.” Says the stooped old figure dryly, “Of this allow, if you have ever spent time *worse* ere now!”

He adds, glancing back with a smile as he turns away, “If never *yet*, *Time* himself doth say: he wishes earnestly you never may!”

Inland from the busy seaport where wide, round-bottomed ships lie at anchor, laden with golden grain and bound for many distant ports, stands the palace of *Bohemia*, now splendid in the morning sunlight. King *Polixenes* walks in the garden with his trusted old adviser—one to whom he has long felt he owes his life.

“I pray thee, good *Camillo*, be no more importunate!” says *Polixenes* earnestly. “’Tis a sickness to *deny* thee *anything*—a *death* to grant *this*!”

But the former *Sicilian* ambassador, too, pleads: “It is *sixteen years* since I saw *my country*! Though I have for the most part been airèd abroad, I desire to lay my bones there. Besides, my old master hath *sent* for me—the *penitent king*, whose deep sorrows I might somewhat *allay*, unless I o’erween to think so—which is another spur to my departure.”

“As thou lovest me, *Camillo*, wipe not out the rest of thy services by leaving me now in the *need* I have of thee! *Thine own goodness* hath made it better not to have *had* thee than thus to *lack* thee! Having made for me businesses which, *without* thee, none can sufficiently *manage*, thou must either stay to execute them thyself, or take away *with* thee the very services thou hast done! Which, if I have not enough rewarded—as *too* much I *cannot*!—being more thankful to thee shall be my *study*, and my profit therein reaping thy *friendship*!”

His brow furrows. “Prithee speak no more of that fatal country, *Sicilia*—whose very *naming* punishes me with the remembrance of that, as thou callest him, *penitent, reconcilèd king*—my *brother*, whose loss of his most-precious queen and children are even *now* to be *lamented afresh*!”

He thinks of his own boy, now a man of twenty-three—and increasingly independent. “Say to me: when sawest thou Prince *Florizel*, my son?” He frowns again. “Kings are no less unhappy, their issue *not being gracious*, than they are in *losing* them when they have *proven* virtues.”

“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 retirèd from court, and is less frequent to his princely exercises than *formerly* he hath appearèd.”

Polixenes nods. “I have considered as much, *Camillo*, and with some care!—so far that I have *eyes* under my service”—spies—“which look into his removedness—from whom I have this intelligence: that he is seldom far from the house of a most-humble *shepherd*—a man, they say, who from very *nothing*, and beyond the imagination of his neighbours, has grown unto an unimpeachable *estate*!”

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

“That’s likewise part of my intelligence!—and I *fear* the angle”—fishing lure—“that plucks our son thither!”

“Thou shalt accompany us to the place, where we will—not *appearing* as what we *are*—have some question with the shepherd, from whose simplicity I think it not uneasy to get the cause of my son’s resort thither.

“Prithee, immediately be my partner in *this* business—and lay aside thy thoughts of *Sicilia*!”

Camillo bows. “I willingly obey your command.”

Polixenes warmly clasps an arm around his shoulders. “My best *Camillo*!”

“We must *disguise* ourselves,” he says, as they head into the castle.

On the dry, rutted road near a cottage at the edge of town, a jolly peddler whistles cheerfully as he comes to the farm village where today hard-working local shepherds are celebrating the annual shearing of sheep and selling of the wool. The crafty rascal Autolycus intends to leave the peasants shorn as well.

Sunshine and blue sky move the vagrant to sing a ribald rhyme:

“When *daffodils* begin to peer,
With *Heigh!* the *wayward wench*, o’er dale,
Why, then comes in the *sweet* o’ the year—
For the *red blood*”—ardor—“reins-in winter’s *pale!*”

“A white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
With *Heigh!* the sweet birds, oh, how they sing!
Doth set my fugging teeth on edge—
For a quart of *ale* “—what he’ll get for the stolen linen—“is a dish for a *king!*”

“The lark, that *tirra-lyra* chants,
With *Heigh*, with *Heigh*, the thrush and the jay,
Has *summer* songs for me and my ‘aunts,’
While we lie *tumbling in the hay!*”

He recalls a recent run of ill fortune. *I have served Prince Florizel, and in my time wore three-pile!*—costly livery. *But now I am out of service.*

“But shall I go mourn for that, my dear?
The pale moon *shines* by night!—
And when *I* wander here and there,
I then do most go *right!*”

“If *tinkers* may have leave to live,
And bear a sow-skin budget,
Then *my* account *I* may as well give—
And in the stocks *avouch* it!”

My traffic is sheets; when the hawk builds,—the pilferer is feathering his nest, as it were—
watch your lesser linen!

My father named me after Autolycus—who, being, as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.

In homage, perhaps, to the fleet-footed Greek exemplar of thieves described by Homer, he straightens and brushes his thin, sun-faded coat, wine-stained doublet, and dusty breeches, ignoring the blotches and spatters of mud on his stockings. *With dice by drabs I purchased this caparison, and my ‘revenue’ is the simple cheat!*

But Autolycus shuns the armed robber’s rougher work: *Knocks—and gallows—are too powerful along the highway!*—*beating and hanging are terrors to me!* He shrugs. *As for the life to come, I sleep without a thought of it.*

He spots, approaching, a young man whom he might well fleece. *A prize! A prize!*

The shepherd’s son, now a handsome man of twenty-six, is looking down as he goes, and muttering to himself about the sale of his wool. “Let me see. Fifteen hundred *shorn*; every ’leven-wether *tods*; every tod yields a pound and odd shilling... what comes the wool to?”

Autolycus drops to the ground and tips his pack of sundry wares onto its side, preparing a well practiced trap. *If the springe hold, the gamecock’s mine!*

The rustic abandons mental calculation: *I cannot do ’t without counters.* He remembers his errand in town, and finds a folded scrap in a pocket.

Let me see; what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound 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 four and twenty nose-gays for the shearers—three-man-song men all, and very good ones! But they are, most of them, means and basses—only one puritan—a teasing term for tenor—amongst them—and he sings psalms to horn-pipes! —mild lyrics set to sailors’ bold dances.

He looks again at the list. *I must have saffron to colour the warden-pies, mace... dates?* He checks, hopefully. *None; that’s not on my note. Nutmegs, seven; a root or two of ginger, but that I may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o’ the sun.*

Autolycus cries out: “*Oh, that ever I was born!*” He writhes on the turf by the road.

“*I’ the name of me!*” cries the rustic—he eschews profanity—upon seeing him.

“*Oh, help me, help me! Only pluck off these rags—and then death, death!*”

Says the strong young shepherd, kneeling beside the slender traveler, “*Alack, poor soul, thou hast need of more rags to lay on thee, rather than have these off!*”

Autolycus never argues with a mark, but he offers an explanation. “*Oh, sir, the loathsomeness of them offends me more than the stripes*”—welts—“*I have received—which are mighty ones, and millions!*”

“*Alas, poor man!—a million of beatings could add up to a great matter!*” says the lad.

“*I am robbed, sir, and beaten!—my money and apparel taken from me, and these detestable things put upon me!*”

“*What, by a man on horse, or man afoot?*”

A new rider would have been noted here. “*Afoot, man!—sweet sir, afoot man!*”

“*Indeed he should be a footman, judging by the garments he has left with thee!*” The young man wrinkles his nose. “*If this be a horseman’s coat, it hath seen very hot service!*” He rises.

“*Lend me thy hand; I’ll help thee up. Come, lend me thy hand...*”

Autolycus warily raises one arm. “*Oh, good sir, tenderly... oh!*”

“*Alas, poor soul!*”

“*Oh, good sir, softly, good sir! I fear, sir, my shoulder-blade is out!*”

“*How now? Canst stand?*” He leans down and, his big, sun-browned hands beneath the apparent victim’s arms, help the man to rise.

Autolycus, meanwhile, has stolen the pouch of coins from beneath his coat. “*Softly, dear sir; good sir, softly! You ha’ done me a charitable office,*” he says, enjoying the irony.

“*Dost lack any money?*” asks the kindly countryman. “*I have a little money for thee...*”

“*No, good sweet sir!*” says Autolycus hastily, “*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!*”

“*What manner of fellow was he that robbed you?*”

Autolycus describes the knave who is, indeed, responsible for his decline: “*A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with troll-my-dame!*”—the three-card find-the-queen cheat. “*Yet I knew him once to be a servant of the prince! I cannot tell, good sir, for which of his virtues it was, but certainly he was whipped out of the court!*”

“*His vices, you should say,*” the local man corrects. “*There’s no virtue that’s whipped out of the court; they’d cherish it, to make it stay there.*” He shrugs. “*And yet it will do no more than abide*”—nobles’ virtuousness is more assumed than practiced.

“*Vices I would say, sir!*” says Autolycus. “*I know this man well: he hath since been an ape-leader and a process-server and a bailiff. Then he compassed a motion of the prodigal son,*”—toured a puppet version of the parable, “*and married a tinker’s wife*”—not a term of admiration—“*within a mile of where my land and living lie!*”—*lie* indeed; he has no property, nor revenue from any. “*And, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled solely on rogue!*”

“*Some call him Autolycus.*”

“*Out upon him!*” cries the shepherd angrily, recognizing the infamous name. “*A prick, for my life!—prick!* He haunts wakes, fairs and bear-baitings!”

“*Very true, sir!*—he, sir, *he!*—*that’s* the rogue who put me into *this apparel!*”

“Not a more *cowardly* rogue in all Bohemia,” mutters the shepherd contemptuously. “If you had but *looked big* and *spit* at him, he’d have run!”

“I must confess to you, sir, I am no fighter; I am flawed of heart that way—and that *he* knew, I warrant him!”

“How do you now?”

Autolycus touches his own shoulder gingerly. “Sweet sir, much better than I was!” he says, aware of the purloined purse’s heft. “I can stand and walk. I will even now take my leave of you, and pace softly towards my kinsman’s.”

“Shall I bring thee on the way?”

“No, good-facèd sir; no, sweet sir.”

“Then fare thee well! I must go buy spices for our sheep-shearing.”

“Prosper you, sweet sir!” He watches the shepherd striding away, unaware of being penniless, toward the market. *Your purse is not hot enough to purchase your spice!*

The vagrant rubs his hands together happily—and he considers various disguises. *I’ll be with you at your sheep-shearing, too! If I make not this cheat bring out another—and prove the shearers sheep—let me be unenrollèd, and my name put in the book of virtue!*

He sings as he digs around in his case for a distinctive false moustache:

“Jog on, jog on the foot-path way,

And merrily hunt the stile-*a!*”—steps over a wall.

“A *merry* heart goes all the day;

Your *sad* one tires in a mile-*a!*”

Outside the shepherd’s cottage stands Prince Florizel; as usual when he is visits here, the young nobleman is disguised, pretending to be “Doricles,” a country gentleman—one whose costly clothes are always new and fresh.

Perdita is serving as this year’s wool-festival queen, and he has brought her a flowery dress fit for a harvest deity who wears garlands. He beams. “These, your unusual clothes, to each part of you do give a life!—not as *shepherdess*, but *Flora*, appearing at April’s front! *Your* sheep-shearing is as a meeting of the petty *gods*—and you the *queen* of’t!”

Only Perdita knows who he really is; and, acutely aware of the disparity between their social ranks, she is somewhat discomfited by their apparel. “Sir, my gracious lord, chiding at your extremes becomes me not, so pardon that I name them: your high *self*, the gracious mark o’ the land, you have obscurèd with a *swain*’s wearing—and *me*, poor lowly maid, most *goddess*-like pranked up! But that our feasts at every meal have *folly*, and the feeders digest it as a custom, I should *blush* to see you so attirèd—it’s worn, I think, to show myself a glass!”—a mirror reflecting her true rank—she believes—as a commoner engaging in imposture.

Florizel reassures her yet again. “I *bless* the time when my good falcon made its flight across thy father’s ground!” He met her while engaged in the sport of falconry.

“Now may Jove afford you *cause!*” She adjusts her flowers. “Your greatness hath not been used to fear; for me, the difference forges *dread!* Even now I tremble to think that your *father* could, by some accident, pass this way just as you did! *Oh, the Fates!*—how he would *look*, seeing his noble work so vilely bound up! What would he *say?* And how could I, in these my borrowed flaunts, behold the sternness of his *presence?*”—his commanding dignity, bolstered by courtiers in attendance.

Florizel smiles. “Apprehend nothing but *jollity!* The *gods themselves*, humbling their deities for *love*, have taken the shapes of *beasts* upon them: Jupiter became a bull, and *bellowed;* the

green Neptune, a ram, and *bleated*—and the *fire-robèd* god, golden *Apollo*, became a poor, humble swain, as I seem now.

“Their transformations were never for a rarer example of *beauty*,” he says, gazing at her—and adding, “nor in a way so *chaste*, since my desires run not before mine *honour*, nor my lust burn hotter than my *promise*.” They are both virgins.

Perdita frets. “*Oh*, but, sir, your resolution cannot hold when ’tis opposed, as it *must* be, by the power of the *king*! Of these two necessities, which then will speak: *one* must be that *you change this purpose*—or *I lose my life*!”

Florizel takes her hand. “*Dearest Perdita*, I prithee darken not the mirth o’ the feast with these forcèd thoughts! Either I’ll be *thine*, my fair, or *not my father’s*! For I cannot be mine *own*—nor *anything to any*—if I be not *thine*! To this I am most constant, though *Destiny* say no!

“Be *merry*, gentle!—stifle such thoughts as those with everything that you *behold* the while! Your *guests* are coming!—lift up your countenance as if it were the day of celebration of that *nuptial* which we two have sworn shall come!”

Perdita will try. “O Lady Fortune,” she pleads, “stand you *auspicious*!”

“See—your guests approach! Address yourself to entertain them *sprightly*, and let’s be ready with *mirth*!”

Along with the villagers now joining in the festive event comes the aging shepherd, returning from town with his son; they bring the young man’s female friends, Mopsa and Dorcas.

And two courtly gentlemen with full, white beards have strolled down the road from the palace; they stand away from the others, observing with amusement.

“*Fie*, daughter!” cries the shepherd jovially. “When my old *wife* lived, upon this day she was *pantler, butler, cook*!—both dame and servant!—*welcomed* all, *served* all!—would sing her song and dance her turn, now *here*, at upper end o’ the table, now i’ the *middle*—on *his* shoulder, and *his*!—her face *on fire*, with labour and the thing she took to *quench* it: she would to each one *sip*!

“*You* are as retired as if you were a *feasted* one, and not the *hostess* of the meeting!” He motions toward two visitors. “Pray you, bid these unknown friends *welcome* to us; for it’s the way to make us *more* friends, once *better known*! Come, *blench your blushes*, and present yourself as that which you are: *Mistress o’ the Feast*!”

“Come on and bid all *welcome* to your sheep-shearing, so your good flock shall *prosper*!”

She smiles, nods, and begins here duties, walking among the happy crowd.

Perdita curtsies to the courtiers. “Sir, welcome!” she tells Lord Camillo. “It is my father’s will I should take on me the hostess-ship o’ the day.” She turns to the disguised King Polixenes. “You’re *welcome*, sir!

“Give me those flowers there, Dorcas.” She selects some fresh, aromatic greens with tiny blue blossoms from the basket, and hands bunches to the lords. “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, and welcome to our shearing!”

Polixenes chuckles. “Shepherdess, a fair one are you!—well you fit our *ages* with flowers of *winter*!”

Perdita thinks. “Sir, before the *year* grows ancient—not yet at summer’s death, nor to the birth of trembling winter—the fairest flowers o’ the season are our *carnations*”—a regal name derived from *coronation*. She shrugs. “And their streakèd *gillyvors*, which some call ‘nature’s bastards.’ Of *that* kind our rustic garden’s barren, and I care not to get slips of them.”

“Wherefore, gentle maiden, do you neglect *them*?” asks the king.

“For I have heard it said there is an *artifice* which their pièdness shares with great creating *Nature*.”

Polixenes considers the deliberate blending. “Say there be; yet a nature is made *better* by no method unless Nature *makes* that method—so, *over* that art which you say adds to nature is an art that *Nature* makes,” he argues. “You see, sweet maid, we marry a *gentler* scion to the *wildest*

stock, and so conceive from bark of *baser* kind a bud of *nobler* race! This is an art which does change, *mend* rather, the art of Nature itself.”

Perdita says, politely, “It is so.”

“Then make your garden *rich* in gillyvors,” urges Polixenes, “and do not call them bastards!”

But Perdita shakes her head; she distrusts mating based on appearance. “I’ll not put a dibble in earth to set one slip of them!”—plant a single gillyvor. “No more than, were I *painted*,”—enhanced by cosmetics, “would I wish that this youth”—she looks to her swain-prince—“should say ’twere *well!*—and only *therefore* desire to breed by me!”

She offers the gentlemen a more-vivid selection. “Here’s flowers for *you*: hot lavender; mints; savoury marjoram; the marigold—that goes to bed wi’ the sun, and with him rises weeping! These are flowers of midsummer—and I think they are given to men of *middle* age.” She sees that they smile, pleased. “You’re very welcome!”

Lord Camillo, as impressed with the young shepherdess’s poise as her beauty, bows. “I should leave *grazing*, were I your flock, and live only by *gazing!*”

Perdita laughs. “*Oh, alas!*—you’d be so lean that blasts of *January* would blow through and through you!”

She turns to Prince Florizel. “Now, my fair’st friend, I would I had some flowers of the *spring* that might become *your* time of day.” She smiles at Dorcas and Mopsa. “And yours, and yours—upon virgin branches growing yet, maidenhood swearing.”

Wisely, the two are silent.

Perdita looks up, thinking wistfully of the season past. “O Proserpina, now for the frightened flowers that thou let’st fall from Dis’s waggon: *daffodils*, that come before the swallow dares, and face the winds of March with beauty; *violets*, dim, but sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes or Cytherea’s breath; pale *primroses* that die unmarried ere they can behold bright Phoebus in his *strength*—a malady most insidious to maidens!—bold *oxlips*; and the crown imperial, *lilies* of all kinds, the flower-de-luce being one.

“Oh, these I *lack* to make garlands for you,” she tells the young women, “and, for my sweet *friend*,” she says, glancing at Florizel, “to *strew* o’er and o’er him!”

Florizel teases: “*What*—like a *corpse*?”

“*No!*” cries Perdita, “like a stream bank for Love”—Cupid—“to lie and *play upon!* Not like a *corpse!* If to be *buried*, only *quick*,”—living, “and *in mine arms!*”

“Come, take your flowers!” she murmurs, blushing again. “Methinks I play as I have seen them do in Whitsun *pastorals!*”—Pentecost programs. “Surely this robe of mine does change my disposition!”

Florizel adores her. “What *you* do always *better*s 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 in ordering your affairs, sing *them* too! When you do *dance*, I wish you were like a wave on the sea, that you might ever do *nothing but that!*—ever *move*, still *so*, and own no other function! Each of your doings, singular in each particular, *crowns* what you are doing in the present deed, so that *all* your acts are a *queen’s!*”

The festival queen cries in mock alarm, “Oh, *Doricles*, your praises are *too large!* But that your youth and the *true* blood which peepeth fairly through’t do plainly give you out to be an *unstained* shepherd, I might fear, with some wisdom, my *Doricles*, that you wooed me the *false* way!”

Florizel laughs. “I think you have as little skill in *fearing* as I have purpose to *put* you to’t! But come: our *dance*, I pray! Your hand, my Perdita!—as turtledoves pair, that *never mean to part!*”

“I’ll affirm with ’em!” says Perdita happily. She curtsies to the noblemen, and the lovers go, hand-in-hand, to join the other couples preparing to dance.

The king is quite taken with the young woman: “This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the greensward!” he tells Lord Camillo. “Nothing she does or seems but smacks of something *greater* than herself!—too noble for *this* place!”

The courtier, watching the pair, smiles. “He is telling her something that makes her blood look out!” The blush sets off her complexion. “Good sooth, she *is* the queen of curds and cream!”

Amid the gathering crowd of rustics, the old shepherd’s son, a lusty lad savoring the holiday, claps his hands over his head to summon the musicians. “Come on, strike up!”

Dorcas taunts him about her new rival. “If *Mopsa* must be your mistress!” she says, proffering a white bulb, “marry, *garlic!*—to mend her kissing with!”

Mopsa, laughing, shoves her hand away. “*Now*, in good time!” She purses her lips.

But the man refuses to be distracted. “Come, *strike up!*” he calls, and he takes Mopsa’s hand.

The musicians, their tabors, bells and flutes ready, respond with enthusiasm—and to their lively tune, the shepherds and farmers’ daughters join gaily in a vigorous morris dance.

Chapter Seven Festival and Flight

Polixenes asks the old man, “Pray, good shepherd, what fair swain is this who dances with your daughter?”

“They call him Doricles, and he boasts himself to have a worthy breeding; and, taking it upon his own behavior, I believe it! He *looks* like sooth. He says he loves my daughter; I think so, too, for never gazed the moon upon the water as he’ll stand and *read*, as ’twere, my daughter’s eyes!” He watches the young people. “And, to be plain, I think there is not *half a kiss* to choose which loves the other best!”

“She dances neatly,” the king notes.

“So she does *anything*, though I report it who should be silent,” says the fatherly shepherd. He alone has read the princess’s history; and he has preserved her dowry. “If young Doricles do light upon her, she shall bring him that which he *dreams* not of!”

Running from the cottage, a servant of the household, a lad of fifteen, comes to the older shepherds. “Oh, 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 count money!—he utters them as if he had *eaten* ballads, and all men’s ears grow to his tones!”

Cries the shepherd, “He could never have come *better!*—he shall come in! I love a ballad—and even *too* well if it be doleful matter *merrily* set down, or a very pleasant thing indeed, but *sung* lamentably!”

“He hath songs for man or woman of all sizes!” the boy reports. “No milliner can so fit his customers with *gloves!*”

“He has the prettiest love-songs for *maids*, which is unusual—and some that are *beyond bawdry!*—with delicate refrains on *dildos* and *dyings*,”—finishing sex, “*jump* her and *thump* her!

“Where some stretch-mouthed rascal”—puritan—“would mean *mischief*, and break a foul *gap*, as it were, into the matter—*he* makes the maid to answer: ‘*Whoops!*—do me no *harm*, good man!’—putting him *off*, slighting him with, ‘*Whoops!*—do me no *harm*, good man!’”

Polixenes laughs at the skilful avoidance of offending. “This is a brave fellow!”

The shepherd, though, is pleased. “Believe me, thou talkest of an *admirably* behaved fellow! Has he any unbraided wares?”—sewing materials.

The boy nods enthusiastically. “He hath *ribbons* of all the colours i’ the rainbow, *points*”—pins—“more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle, though they come to him by the gross!—inkles, caddisses, *cambrics*, *linens!* Why, he sings about ’em as if they were gods or

goddesses! You would think a smock were a *she-angel*, he so chants to the sleeve-end and the needlework about the square of't!"

"Prithee *bring him in*," the old shepherd tells the boy. "And let him approach *singing!*"

Perdita, who has overheard them, frowns. "Forewarn him that he use no *scurrilous words* in's tunes," she urges, as the boy runs to fetch the itinerant merchant.

The younger shepherd is eager: "You can *benefit* from these pedlars, who have more in them than you'd *think*, sister!"

Perdita raises an eyebrow: "Aye, good brother—or *want* to think!" As mistress of the revels, she feels responsible for maintaining propriety.

Coming from the front of the farmhouse, Autolycus arrives in his current disguise, sporting a substantial moustache. As the dancers pause to gather around him, he sings, loudly and brightly, about his wares:

"Linen white as driven snow;
Silk as black as e'er was crow!
Gloves scented sweet as damask roses;
Masks for faces, and some for noses!
Beaded bracelet, necklace amber;
Perfume for a lady's chamber;
Golden quoifs and stomachers,
For my lads to give their dears!
Pins and poking-sticks of steel—
Whatever maids lack, from head to heel!
Come buy of me, come, come *buy!*
Buy, lads, else your lasses *cry! Come buy!*"

The young shepherd watches astutely as the peddler opens his case and displays the range of colorful frippery. He tells Autolycus, "Thou shouldst take no money from *me*, if I were not in love with Mopsa. But, being enthralled as *I am*, it will also mean bondage for certain ribbons and gloves!"

"I was *promised* them *before* the feast," notes Mopsa, a bit tartly, "but they come not too late now."

Dorcas regards her sourly. "He hath promised you more than *that*, or there be liars!"

"He hath paid *you* all he promised," retorts Mopsa. "It may be that he has paid you *more*—which will *shame* you to give him again!"—*return*, if she's pregnant.

"Is there no *manners* left among maids?" protests the young shepherd. "Will they wear their *plackets*"—gossips' sleeves—"where they should bear their faces?" He watches them bicker. "Is there no milking time, or when you are going to bed, or kiln-hole for *whispering* of these secrets, but you must be tittle-tattling *before all our guests*?" he demands. They ignore him, voices rising. "'Tis well they are *whispering!*" he says, as the women continue to squabble. "*Clam o'er your tongues, and not a word more!*"

Mopsa tells him, taking his arm, "I have done. Come, you promised me a tawdry-lace and a pair of sweet gloves!"—perfumed ones.

He urges thrift: "Have I not told thee how I was *cozened* on the way, and lost all my money?"

"And indeed, sir, there *are* cozeners abroad," says the pedlar, nodding in sympathy.

"Therefore it behooves men to be *wary!*"

"Fear not thou, man; thou shalt lose nothing *here*," the shepherd assures him.

"I hope that's so, sir, for I have about me many parcels of charge!"—others' goods, on consignment; and he is keenly aware of the peasants' heavy purses, waiting to be emptied—or filched.

The shepherd and his friends examine the merchandise. "What hast here? Ballads?"

“Pray now, buy some!” cries Mopsa. “I love the songs printed about *life*—for then we are sure they are *true!*”

Autolycus selects such a scandalous sheet: “Here’s one, to a very doleful tune, on how a usurer’s wife was brought to *bed*—for twenty money-bags per *refrain!*”—a jest on both the song element and each instance of her withholding. “And how she longed to eat *adders’* heads, and toads *carbonadoed!*”—scored and broiled.

Mopsa peers at the paper. “Is it *true*, think you?”

“*Very true*—and but a month old!”

“Bless *me* from marrying a *usurer!*” says Dorcas disdainfully.

The peddler points at the sheet, verifying for Mopsa: “Here’s the midwife’s *name* on’t, one Mistress Tale-Porter—and five or six honest wives that were present. Why would I carry *lies* abroad?”

She squeezes the shepherd’s arm. “Pray you now, *buy* it!”

“Come on, lay it by,” he tells the peddler. “Let’s first see more *ballads*; and we’ll buy the other things anon.” His father will have some money with him.

“Here’s another ballad,” says Autolycus, “about a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the four-score of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sang this ballad against the hard hearts of maids. It was thought to be a *woman* who was turned into a cold fish because she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her. The ballad is very pitiful—and as *true!*”

Dorcas is doubtful. “Is it true, think you, too?” she asks the shepherd.

“Five justices’ signatures to it!” says Autolycus, “and more witnesses than my pack will hold!”

“Lay *it* by, too,” the shepherd tells him. “Another!”

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

Mopsa is eager. “Let’s have some *merry* ones!”

Autolycus shows them the song. “Why, this is a *surpassingly* merry one, and goes to the tune of ‘Two Maids Wooing a Man.’ There’s scarce a maid *westward*”—outside the Orient—“but she sings it! ’Tis in request, I can tell you!”

“We can both sing it!” says Mopsa. She looks at the music, and tells Dorcas, “If thou’lt bear a part, thou shalt hear; but ’tis in three parts....”

Sniffs her rival, “*We* had the tune of’t a month ago!”

“I can bear my part!” offers Autolycus; the play on *bare* goes unnoticed. “You must know ’tis my occupation! *Have at it* with you!”

And so they begins to sing:

Autolycus: “Get you hence, for I must go; *where*, it fits not you to know.”

Dorcas: “Whither?”

Mopsa: “Oh, whither?”

Dorcas: “*Whither?*”

Mopsa: “It becomes thine oath full well for thou to *me* thy secrets tell!”

Dorcas: “Me, *too*; let *me* go thither!”

Mopsa: “If thou goest to the grange or mill—”

Dorcas: “If to *either*, thou dost ill!”

Autolycus: “Neither.”

Dorcas: “What, neither?”

Autolycus: “*Neither!*”

Dorcas: “Thou hast sworn *my love* to be!”

Mopsa: “Thou hast sworn it *more to me!* Then whither goest? Say whither!”

The delighted shepherd tells Autolycus, “We’ll have this song out anon, by ourselves!”

“My father and the gentlemen are in serious talk, and we’ll not trouble them now. Come, bring away thy pack after me!

“Wenches, I’ll buy for you *both!* Pedlar, let us have the first choice! Follow me, girls!” They move toward the cottage, to consider.

And you shall pay well for ’em! thinks Autolycus. He waves aloft an array of fluttering ribbons, and sings, as customers congregate and follow:

“Will you *buy*, any tape
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-*a*?
Any silk? Any thread?
Any toys for your head
Of the new’st and finest ware-*a*?
Come to the *pedlar!*
Money’s a meddler”—a play on *medlar*, fruit and, analogically, *pudenda*,
“That doth utterly *all men wear-a!*”

From the farmhouse, the servant rushes up to the old shepherd, even more stirred up than before. “Master, there is three carters, three shepherds, three neat-herds, and three swine-herds that have made themselves *men all of hair!*”—by donning goat-hides.

“They call themselves ‘*salt-tears*,’”—satyrs, actually, “and they have a *dance!*—which the wenches, because *they* are not *in* it, say is”—he mimics their scorn—“a *gallimaufry* of *gambols!*”

“But the men *themselves* are o’ the mind that—if it be not too *rough* for some that know little but *bowling*—it will please *plentifully!*”

The shepherd shows concern. “Away! We’ll none of’t! Here has been too much homely foolery already!” He turns to the taller gentleman. “I know, sir, we weary you....”

“You’re wary of those that *refresh* us!” says Polixenes, smiling at the old man. “Pray, let’s see these four threes of herdsmen!”

The boy tells him eagerly, “*One* three of them, by their own report, sir, hath danced before the *king!* And not the worst of *that* three but jumps *twelve foot and a half*, by the squire!”—he means *square*, a carpenter’s tool.

The graybeard waves him back. “Leave your prating; let them come in!—but *quickly* now, since *these* good men are pleased.”

Polixenes will have a surprise for the shepherd. “Oh, father, you’ll know more of *that* hereafter.”

The lad is already running. “Why, they stay *at the door*, sir!”

The dozen shaggy satyrs center themselves in the festive throng and begin their dance, a spirited—and explicit—tribute to fertility.

During the exuberant performance the king questions the old man further about “Doricles.”

As the dancers take their bows and the spectators applaud, Polixenes speaks privately to Camillo. “He’s simple, and tells *much*.” They watch Florizel chat with Perdita and squeeze her hand. “Is it not *too far gone?* ’Tis time to *part* them.”

The disguised monarch approaches his son. “How now, fair shepherd! Your heart is full of something that does take your mind from *feasting!*” he chuckles. “Sooth, when I was young, and *handed* love as you do, I was wont to *load* my she with knickknacks! *I* would have *ransacked* the pedlar’s silken treasury!—have *poured it out* for her acceptance! You have let him go, and *nothing* mated with him!—if your lass should interpret this as *abuse*, and call it your lack of *love* or *bounty*, you would be straited for a *reply!*—at least, if you make a *care* of happily holding her!”

Florizel smiles, unconcerned. “Old sir, I know she prizes not such trifles as those are! The gifts *she* looks for from me are packed and locked up in my *heart!*”

“Which I have *given* already!—but not delivered....” A slight frown appears.

A change comes over his face, and he turns to Perdita. “O, hear me *breathe my life* before this ancient sir, who, it would seem, hath sometime lovèd!

“I take thy *hand*—this hand, as soft as a dove’s down—and white as an Ethiopian’s tooth, or the fannèd *snow* that’s sifted twice o’er by the northern blasts—”

“What follows *this*?” the king asks Camillo. “How prettily the young swain seems to *wash* a hand that was fair before!” He sees the young man’s blush. “I have put you out,” he says apologetically. “But on with to your protestation: let me hear what you profess!”

“*Do!*—and be *witness* to ’t!”

“And this my neighbour, too?” asks Polixenes.

“And *he*—and *more* than he!” cries Florizel. “*All men!*—the *earth*, the *heavens* and *all!* Were I crownèd most imperial *monarch* thereof, and most *worthily!*—were I the fairest youth that ever made eye swerve!—had I force and knowledge more than was ever *man’s!*—without *her love*, I would not prize them!—*for* her love I’d *employ them all*, and commend them to her *service!*—or condemn them to their own perdition!”

“Fairly offered!” says Polixenes.

Camillo concurs: “This shows a sound affection!”

Asks the old shepherd, “But, my daughter, say *you* the like to *him*?”

Perdita smiles. “I cannot speak so well!—nothing so well—nor *mean any better!*” Her eyes glisten. “But in the purity of *his* thoughts I trace the pattern of mine *own!*”

“Take hands!—a *bargain!*” cries the shepherd, confirming their betrothal. “And, friends unknown, you shall bear witness to ’t: I *give my daughter to him*, and will make her portion”—inheritance—“*equal his!*”

Unlike the visitors, “Doricles” is aware of his own princely potion: “Ah, that must be i’ the *virtue* of your daughter!” *One having died, I shall have more than you can yet dream of!*—*enough then for your wonder!* “But, come on, contract us, before these witnesses!”

“Come, your hand; and, daughter, yours.” The shepherd brings them together.

But now Polixenes intercedes “*Soft a while*, swain, I beseech you! Have you a *father*?”

“I have—but what of him?”

“Knows *he* of this?”

“He neither does nor shall.”

The sovereign seems puzzled. “Methinks a father is, at the nuptial of his son, the guest that *best* becomes the *table!* Pray you, hear me once more: is your father grown incapable of reasonable affairs? Is he stupid with age and altering rheums? Can he not speak?—hear?—know man from man?—dispute his own estate? Lies he bed-ridden, doing nothing but again what he did being *childish*?”

“No, good sir!” says Florizel happily. “He has his *health*—and ampler *strength*, indeed, than *most* have at his age.”

Polixenes frowns. “By my white beard, you offer him, if this be so, a *wrong* somewhat *unfilial!* There’s reason a son should choose himself a wife, but *as good* reason that the father, all of whose *joy* is in nothing else but fair *posterity*, should hold some *counsel* in such a business!”

The prince agrees politely. “I yield *all* this, but for some other reasons, my grave sir, which ’tis not fit that you know, I will not acquaint my father with this business.” He believes the king would forbid his marriage to a commoner.

“Let him know’t,” urges Polixenes.

“He shall not.”

“Prithee, *let him!*”

“No, he must not.”

The shepherd touches Florizel’s sleeve kindly. “*Let him*, my son.” He smiles, thinking of the princess’s treasure. “He shall not need to grieve at knowing of thy choice!”

“Come, come, he *must not!*” insists Florizel. “Mark our contract,” he says, and again turns to Perdita.

But Polixenes, furious, pulls off the false whiskers. “Mark your *divorce*, young sir!—whom *Son* I dare not call!—thou art too *base* to be *acknowledgèd!*—thou, a *sceptre*’s heir, who thus affect’st a *sheep-hook!*”

He glares at the shepherd: “Thou, *old traitor*, I am sorry that by *hanging* thee I can but *shorten* thy life *one week!*” He glares at Perdita. “And thou, fresh piece of excellent *witchcraft*, who certainly must *know* the royal fool thou copest with—”

The shepherd, wide-eyed, now recognizes the king: “*Oh, my heart!*”

“—I’ll have thy beauty *scratched with briars*, and made more homely than thy *state!*”

The monarch turns to his son. “As for *thee*, fond boy, if *ever* I may know thou dost but *sigh* because thou shalt *no more see* this *trinket*—as I intend that thou *never shall!*—we’ll *bar thee from succession!*—hold thee *not of our blood!*—no, not *our* kin, further back than *Deucalion!*”—since before the Flood. “Mark thou my words!

“Follow us to the court!”

But Polixenes pauses; he can see that Camillo is appalled—and very likely is remembering another harsh, royal condemnation. The king addresses the shepherd. “Thou, *churl*, for this time, though *full* with our *displeasure*, yet we free thee from the deadly blow of it.

“As for *you, enchantment,*” he tells Perdita, “worthy enough for a *herdsman!*—yea, for him too who makes *himself*, but for *our* honour therein, unworthy *even of thee!*—if ever henceforth thou open these rural latches to his entrance, or hoop his body more with thy *embraces*, I will devise for thee a death as *cruel* as thou art *tender* to’t!”

With that, the king storms away, to return to the palace.

“Even here *undone,*” says Perdita sadly.

But she stands before the humble home proudly—and somewhat surprised at her response to the king’s presence. “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 its visage from *our cottage*, but looks on both alike!”

She faces the prince tearfully. “Will’t please you, sir, be gone? I *told* you what would come of this! Beseech you, of your own state take care!” She pulls off her crown of flowers. “From this *dream* of mine being now awake, I’ll *queen* it no inch farther, but milk my ewes—and *weep!*”

Lord Camillo is watching the very distraught old shepherd, whose hand is clutched over his heart. “Why, how now, father?—*speak* ere thou diest!”

The man shakes his head. “I *cannot* speak!—nor *think*, nor dare to *know* that which I know!” He tells the prince, “Oh, sir, you have *undone* a man of *fourscore three*, who thought to fill his grave in quiet!—yea, to die upon the bed *my father* died in, 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!” He turns to Perdita. “O cursèd wretch!—thou *knew*’st this was *the prince?*—and wouldst adventure to mingle *faith* with him? Undone! *Undone!*” The shepherd staggers feebly into his cottage. “If I might die within this hour, I have lived to die when I desire!”

The prince meets Perdita’s sorrowful gaze. “Why look you so upon me? I am but *sorry*, not *afeard!*—delayed, but nothing *altered!* What I was, I *am!*—more *straining on* for the plucking *back!*—not unwillingly following my *leash!*”

Warns Camillo, “Gracious my lord, 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 come not before him till the fury of his highness *settles!*”

“I do not purpose it.” Florizel regards the disguised gentleman carefully: “I think... *Camillo?*”

The nobleman removes the false whiskers and bows. “Even he, my lord.”

Perdita wrings her hands, dismayed. “How often have I *told* you ’twould be thus?—how often said my *dignity* would last but till ’twere *known!*”

“It cannot *fail* but by the *violation of my faith!*” insists the prince, “and *then* let Nature *crush the sides o’ the earth together!*—and *mar all the seeds within!*”

“*Lift up thy looks!*”

“From my succession wipe me, Father! I am heir to *my affection!*”

Camillo would urge caution. “*Be advisèd—*”

“*I am!*—and by my *fancy!*” cries the youth. “If my *reason* will thereto be *obedient* I’ll have reason; if not, my senses, better pleasèd with *madness*, do *bid it welcome!*”

Camillo shakes his head. “This is desperation, sir!”

“So call it—but as it does *fulfil my vow*, I needs must think it *honesty!*” argues Florizel.

“Camillo, not for Bohemia’s *throne*, nor all the pomp that may thereat be gleaned—not for all the *sun* sees, or the guarded *earth* wombs, or the profound *sea* hides in unknown fathoms will I break my oath to this, my fair *belovèd!*”

“Therefore, I pray you, as you have ever been my father’s honoured *friend*: when he shall miss me—as, in faith, I mean not to see him again!—cast your *good counsels* upon his anger! And let *myself* and *Fortune* tug, during the time to come.

“This you may know, and so deliver: I am *putting to sea* with her whom here on shore I cannot hold! And, most opportune to our need, I have a vessel that rides fast by, preparèd but for *this design!* What course I mean to hold shall nothing benefit your knowledge, nor concern *me* by the reporting.”

“Oh, my lord,” says Camillo, kindly but urgently, “I would your spirit were easier, for taking advice—or *stronger*, given your *need!*”

“Hark, Perdita!” says the prince, drawing her aside to explain further, and to offer assurance.

Camillo is thinking, hard. *He’s immovable—resolvèd 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—and purchase the sight again of dear Sicilia, and that unhappy king, my master, whom I so much thirst to see!

Florizel turns back to him and smiles apologetically. “Now, good Camillo, I am so fraught with curious business that I’ll leave without ceremony—”

But the courtier has an idea to propose. “Sir, I think you have heard of my poor services, i’ the love that I have borne your father?”

“*Very nobly* have you deservèd! It is my father’s *music* to *speak* your deeds, not little of his care to have them *recompensèd* as well as thought on!”

“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.

“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 whom, I see, there’s no disjunction to be made but by your ruin, may heavens forefend!

“*Marry* her, and my best endeavours in your absence will strive to qualify your father’s discontent, and bring him up to *liking!*”

Florizel is growing hopeful. “*How*, Camillo, may this, almost a *miracle*, be *done?*—so that I may entrust it to thee—and *after*, call thee something *more than man!*”

“Have you thought on a place whereto you’ll go?”

“Not any, yet,” the prince confesses, “but though an unthought-on incidence is guilty in what we wildly do, we profess ourselves not to be the slaves of *chance*, and flies in every wind that blows.”

“Then list to me! If you will not change your purpose, and will undergo this flight, follow it thus: *make for Sicilia*, and there present yourself and your fair princess—for so I see she must be—’fore *Leontes!*”

“She shall be garbed as *becomes* the partner of your bed!” he promises. “Methinks I see Leontes: opening his free arms, and weeping forth his *welcomes*, he asks *forgiveness* of thee, the

son, as if 'twere *the father's* person!—kisses the hands of your fresh *princess!*—o'er and o'er divides him 'twixt his unkindness and his *kindness*: the one he chides to hell!—and bids the other *grow*, faster than *thought* or *time!*"

The prince considers. "Worthy Camillo, what colour shall I hold up before him for my visitation?"

The advisor is ready: "*Sent* by the king your father!—to greet Leontes, and to give him *comforts!*"

"Sir, the *manner* of your bearing towards him, what you *as if from your father* shall deliver, and things known but betwixt us three"—the kings and Camillo—"I'll *write down!*—which shall point forth for you what at every sitting you must say, so that he shall not perceive but that you have your *father's* bosom there, and speak his very heart!"

Florizel is nearly convinced. "I am bound to you! There is some sap in this!"

Camillo nods. "A cause more promising than a wild dedication of yourselves to *unpathèd waters*, undreamèd *shores!*—most certain of *miseries* enough, with no hope to help you as you shake off one but to take *another*, and with nothing so certain as your anchors' doing their best office if they can but *stay* you where you'll be loath to *be!*"

"Besides, you know, *prosperity* is the very *bond* of love, whose fresh *complexion* and whose *heart* affliction alters *together.*"

The shepherdess disagrees—politely—with the lord: "*One* of these is true; I think affliction may subdue the *cheek*, but not take in the *mind.*"

"*Ah*, say you so?" Camillo is actually quite pleased with the considered contradiction. He smiles. "There shall not at your father's house these seven years be born such another!"

"My good Camillo, she is as forward of *her upbringing* as she is i' the rear of *our birth*," says Florizel, unaware of her true parentage.

Says Camillo, "I cannot say 'tis pity she lacks *instruction*—for she seems a mistress to most who *teach!*"

"With your pardon, sir," says she, "for that I'll *blush* your thanks!"

"My prettiest Perdita!" says the prince, taking her hand. "But, oh, 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 furnishèd like Bohemia's son, nor shall so appear in Sicilia!" He is dressed as the gentle but bucolic Doricles.

"My lord, fear none of this," Camillo tells him, regarding the venture abroad. "I think you know my fortunes do all lie there; it shall be my care to have you *royally* appointed, as if the *scene* you play *were* thine!"

"For instance, sir, so that you may know you shall not lack one word...."

He further details his scheme for the displaced lovers.

Chapter Eight Cunning Disguises

The crafty peddler Autolycus returns from the cottage to the road—laughing to himself. *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 ribbon, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tie, bracelet, or horn-ring to keep my pack from fasting!*

They thronged to be first to buy, as if my trinkets had been hallowed, and brought a benediction to the buyer!—by which means I saw whose purse was best in the mixture; and what I saw, for my good use I remembered!

The young shepherd was an unwitting accomplice. *My clown, who lacks somewhat of being a reasoning man, grew so in love with the wenches' song that he would not stir his pettitoes till he had learned both tune and words—which so drew the rest of the herd to me it was without sense!*

With all their other senses stuck into ears, you might have pinched a placket! —a woman's private pocket, as it were. 'Twas nothing to geld a codpiece of a purse! I could have filed off keys that hung on chains!—no feeling! Nor hearing, except my Sir Song—and admiring the nothing of it!

He laughs aloud. *So in that 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 son, and scared my choughs from the chaff, —crows from straw— I had not left a purse alive in the whole army!*

Suddenly he stops, realizing that a nobleman and two young people have come near. He slides his newly fat sack of coins into the pack lying flat at his feet.

Lord Camillo is elaborating upon his scheme: "Nay, but *my letters*—by those means' being there so soon as you arrive—shall clear that doubt!"

Says Florizel, "And those that you'll procure from King Leontes...."

Camillo nods. "Shall satisfy your father!"

Perdita is pleased. "*Happy* be you!—all that you speak shows *fair!*"

Camillo spots the disguised Autolycus. "Who have we here? We'll make an instrument of this—omit nothing that may give us aid!" The fleeing couple still must get to the prince's ship.

The guilty vagabond is not sure what he might have expressed aloud. *If they have overheard me just now, why, hanging!*

"How now, good fellow!" says Camillo. "Why shakest thou so? Fear not, man; here's no harm intended to thee."

Says Autolycus humbly, bowing, "I am a *poor* fellow, sir..."

"Well, be so *still*; here's nobody will steal *that* from thee!" says Camillo jovially, eyeing the peddler's seedy clothing. "Yet for the *outside* of thy poverty we must make an *exchange*. Therefore discase thee instantly—thou must understand there's a *necessity* in't!—and switch garments with this gentleman!"

"Though the pennyworth on *his* side be the worse, yet hold thee—there's some *boot!*" He gives the peddler several coins.

Autolycus is quite apprehensive now, in the familiar presence of the prince he once served and the nobleman. Looking away, he mumbles, "I am a poor fellow, sir." *I know ye well enough!*

"Nay, prithee, *dispatch!*" urges Camillo; he motions toward Florizel, who has removed his new coat and is unbuttoning the spotless doublet. "The gentleman is half flayed already!"

"Are you in *earnest*, sir?" *I smell a trick in't!*

"*Dispatch*, I prithee!" says Florizel, starting to pull down his clean trousers. Perdita steps aside, and demurely looks away.

"Indeed, I *have* had *earnest*," says Autolycus tremulously, staring at the money. "But I cannot with conscience take it...."

"Unbuckle, *unbuckle!*" demands Lord Camillo impatiently.

Soon, the prince and the pickpocket have traded disguises.

Camillo turns to Perdita, whose gown could draw unwanted attention. "*Fortunate* mistress—may my prophecy come *home* to ye!—you must retire yourself into something *covert!* Take your sweetheart's velvet cap and pluck it o'er your brows, to muffle your face. Dismantle you,"—remove the festive flowers, "and, as best you can, disliken the truth of your *own* seeming, so that you may—for I do fear eyes!—get over to shipboard undescried."

She cheerfully agrees. "I see the *play* so lies that I must *bear a part!*" she laughs, pulling the cap from Florizel's head.

"No remedy," says Camillo. He looks to the men. "Have you done there?"

Florizel has been satisfactorily transformed. "Should I now meet my father, he would not call me Son!"

"Nay, you shall not have *no hat*," says Camillo, taking the peddler's tawdry one and handing it to the prince. "Come, lady, come!"

“Farewell, my friend!” he tells Autolycus.

“*Adieu, sir!*” says the cutpurse gratefully, resplendent in his new clothes.

Florizel takes his lady’s hand. “Oh, Perdita, what have we twain forgot? Pray you, a word . . .”

As they talk, Lord Camillo thinks. *What I do next shall be to tell the king of this escape, and whither they are bound—wherein my hope is that I shall so prevail as to force him to go after! In his company I shall re-view Sicilia, for whose sight I have a yeoman’s longing!*

The prince and his shepherdess are ready to head toward the waiting vessel. “Fortune speed us! Thus we set on, Camillo, to the sea-side!”

“The swifter speed the better!” calls Camillo, as they go.

And then he hurries along the road to the palace; he has some news for the angry King Polixenes.

Autolycus, hatless, but in a gentleman’s clean garb, however ill-fitting on his wiry frame, has been pondering the others’ haste. *I understand their business! I heard it! Having 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.*

And I see that this is a time when the unjust man doth thrive! What an exchange had this been without boot! He regards the gratuity in his hand. What a boot is here with this exchange!

Surely the gods do this year connive with us, and we may do anything!—extempore!

The prince himself is going about a piece of iniquity: stealing away from his father with his clog at his heels. If I thought it were 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.

The rascal sees the two shepherds emerging from their home—looking worried; the father carries a leather pouch, the son a heavy wooden box. Autolycus turns away and kneels to add the coins to his sackful; but he listens carefully. *Here is more matter for a hot brain!* He rises and rubs his hands together gleefully. *Every lane’s end—every shop, church, session, hanging—yields a careful man work!*

The woeful young shepherd tells his father, “See, *see* what a man you are *now!* There is no other way but to *tell the king* she’s a *changeling*—and none of *your* flesh and blood!”

The old man is distraught. “Nay, but hear me . . .”

“Nay, but hear *me!*”

“Go on, then.”

“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 near her, those *secret* things—all but what she has *with* her! This being done, let the law *go whistle*, I warrant you!”

The father finally agrees to it. “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, trying to make me the king’s *brother-in-law!*”

“Indeed, in *law* was the *farthest off* you could have been from him; even *then* your blood had been the dearer by I know how much an ounce!”—more valuable, yet more likely to be lost.

Very wisely, puppies! thinks Autolycus.

“Well, let us to the king,” says the elderly shepherd, holding up the bundle of Antigonus’s letters. “There is in *this* fardel that which will make him *scratch his beard!*”

Autolycus considers: *I know not what impediment this complaint may be to the flight of my master . . .*

With his father, the young man starts up the road to see the king, and show him the box full of gold. “Pray heartily he be at palace!”

Behind them, Autolycus moves quickly. *Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance! Let me pocket up my pedlar’s excrement,* he thinks, pulling off the false moustache. In

his gentlemanly new guise he strides boldly to the shepherds. “*How now, rustics!* Whither are you bound?” he demands, with a supercilious demeanor.

“To the palace, an it like Your Worship,” the old man replies.

Autolycus is imperious: “Your affairs there—what, with whom—the containing of that fardel—the place of your dwelling, your names, your ages, of what having, breeding—and anything that is fitting to be known, *divulge!*”

The son wants to proceed. “We are but plain fellows, sir—”

“*A lie!*—you are *rough* and *hairy*,” says Autolycus haughtily; *plain* can mean *shaven*. “Let me have no lying! It becomes none but *tradesmen*—and they often give *us soldiers* the lie”—a challenge. “But if we pay them for it”—respond—“with a stamped *coin*, not stabbing *steel*,” he says, “then they do *not* give us the lie!”

“Your Worship had likely have given *us* one,” notes the young man sourly, “if you had not taken it *yourself* with the matter”—by so confessing.

The father regards the apparent gentleman. “Are you a *courtier*, an’t like you, sir?”

“Whether it *like* me or no, I *am* a courtier,” Autolycus replies. He waves a hand toward his new attire. “Seest thou not the air of the *court* in these enfoldings? Hath not my *gait* in it the measure of the court?” He tips back his head to look down at the shepherd. “Receives not thy nose court odor from me? Reflect I not on thy baseness with *courtly* contempt?”

“Thinkest thou, because I insinuate to tease from *thee* thy business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier *cap-à-pé!*”—head to toe. He glares. “And one that will either *push on* or *pluck back* thy *business* there!—wherefore I command thee to open thy affairs!”

But the old shepherd will be careful with his long-held secrets. “My business, sir, is to *the king*.”

“What *advocate* hast thou to him?”

“I know not, an’t like you....”

The son thinks a bribe is being demanded; he whispers to his father, “‘Advocate’ is the courtly word for a *pheasant*. Say you have none.”

“*None*, sir;” says the old man. “I have no cock.” At Autolycus’s laugh he flushes. “Nor hen.”

The rogue sighs and looks upward, wagging his head. “How blessed are we that are not *simple* men! Yet Nature might have made me as these are; therefore I will not disdain.” Noticing a long ivory toothpick in a pocket of the doublet, he extracts it and begins to use it thoughtfully.

- The son, impressed by the rudeness, again whispers. “This cannot be but a great courtier!”

- The father has doubts: “His garments are rich, but he wears them not handsomely.”

- “He seems to be the *more* noble for being eccentric!—a *great* man, I’ll warrant!” He watches the peddler. “I know by the picking of his teeth!”—gentlemen’s habit, he has observed.

Autolycus finishes and spits. “The fardel there,” he says, wiping fingers dry on his coat, “what’s *in* the fardel? Wherefore that *box*?”

“Sir, there lie such secrets in this fardel and box which none must know but the *king*,” the shepherd replies, “and which he *shall* know *within this hour*, if I may come to the speech of him!”

Autolycus shakes his head. “Age, thou hast lost thy labour.”

“Why, sir?”

“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 serious things, thou must know that the king is full of *grief*.”

“So ’tis *said*, sir—over his *son*, who would have married a *shepherd*’s daughter.”

“If that shepherd be not in *hand-fast*”—custody—“let him *fly!*” cries Autolycus angrily. “The *curses* he shall have!—the *tortures* he shall *feel!*—will break the *back* of man, the *heart* of monster!”

The son stares, aghast. “Think you *so*, sir?”

“Nor shall *he alone* suffer what *wit* can make *heavy*, and *vengeance bitter*, but those that are *germane to him*, though removed *fifty times*,”—however distantly related, “shall *all* come unto the hangman! Which, though it be a great pity, yet it is *necessary!*—an old, *sheep-whistling*

rogue, a *ram-tender*, offering to have his daughter come into *grace*?" He frowns in disgust. "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!*"

The wide-eyed young man gulps. "Do you hear, an't like you, sir... had the old man e'er a *son*, sir?"

"He *has* a son—who shall be *flayed alive!*" says Autolycus, "then annointed over with *honey*, and set on the head of a *wasp's* nest!—there to stand till he be three-quarters-and-a-dram *dead!* Then *recovered* again with *aqua vitae*,"—liquor, "or some other *hot* infusion—then, raw as he is, and in the *hottest day* prognostication proclaims, he shall be set against a brick wall, with the *sun* looking a downward eye upon him, where it is to behold him *bitten to death* by *flies!*"

He looks cheerfully at the cowering country men. "But why talk we of those 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* for the king. Being somewhat gently *considered*,"—paid—"I'll bring you where he *is*; aboard, tender your persons to his presence, whisper to him in your behalFs!—and if it be in a man besides the king to *effect* your suits, *here* is the man shall do it!"

The son pulls the father aside. "He seems to be of great *authority!* *Close* with him!—give him *gold!*—and though authority be a stubborn *bear*, yet it is oft led by the nose with *gold!*"—like the brass ring that subdues a captive show-bear. "Show the inside of your purse to the outside of his hand with no more ado!"

"Remember: '*stoned*,' and '*flayed alive*'!"

The old shepherd opens his small leather pouch and hands the peddler its three coins. "An't please you, sir, to undertake the business for us, here is what gold I have." His small savings are hidden at home. "I'll make it *as much more!*—and leave this young man in pawn till I bring it you!"

"After I have done what I promised..." says the scoundrel scrupulously.

"Aye, sir!"

The counterfeit courtier sighs in apparent annoyance at such a trivial matter. "Well, give me the moiety"—first half. He narrows his eyes, looking at the son. "Are you a *party* in this business?"

"Of *some* sort, sir," mumbles the man. "But though my case be a pitiful one, I hope I shall not be *flayed out of it!*" *Case* is also a term for *body*.

"No, that's the case of the *shepherd's* son," says Autolycus, pocketing the gold. "*Hang him!*—he'll be *made an example!*"

The young shepherd nods weakly. "Comfort, good comfort." He whispers urgently to his father. "We must go to the king and *show our strange sights!* He must know 'tis none of *your daughter*—nor my *sister!* We are *gone* else!"

He tells the peddler, "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!"

The knave considers, rubbing his stubbly chin. "I will trust you," he says shamelessly. He points. "Walk before, toward the sea-side; go on the right hand. I will but 'look upon the hedge'"—relieve himself—"and follow you."

"We are *blest* in this man, as I may say," says the younger shepherd, "even *blest!*"

The old man concurs. "Let's go before, as he bids us! He was *provided* to do us good!"

Carrying the princess's gold and the letters, the two head down the lane and toward the sea, where they expect to come before the king—and where Florizel's ship lies at anchor, being readied, hurriedly, for his imminent journey south.

Autolycus watches them go, chuckling to himself. *If I had a mind to be honest, I see that Fortune would not allow me!—she drops booty into my mouth!*

I am courted now by a double opportunity: gold, and a means to do the prince my former master good—and who knows how that may turn back to my advancement?

I will take these two moles, these blind ones, aboard to 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!

Chapter Nine Welcoming Visitors

Years suffused with grief and regret have weighed heavily upon Leontes—and his increasingly concerned court. On this gloomy morning he sits, hunched down on the throne of Sicilia, subdued and miserable.

“Sir, you have *done enough*,” Lord Cleomenes tells the ruler, “and have performed a *saint-like* sorrow! No fault *could* you have made which you have not *redeemèd*—indeed, paid down *more* penitence than done trespass! At last do as the *heavens* have done: forget your evil; with them *forgive* yourself!”

Leontes shakes his head mournfully. “Whilst I remember *her* and her *virtues*, I cannot forget my blemishes in them, and so still think of the wrong I did *myself*—which was so much that heirless it hath made my *kingdom*—and destroyed the sweetest companion that e’er man bred his *hopes* out of!”

Lady Paulina stands ready to augment his suffering. “True, too *true*, my lord. If, one by one, you wedded *all in the world*—or took something good from each of the all-that-are to make a *perfect* woman—she whom you killed would still be unparalleled!”

Leontes moans. “So *I* think: killed. She I *killed*. I *did* so!

“But thou strikest me sorely, to *say* I did! Is it as bitter upon thy tongue as in my *thought*? Now—for *good*, now—say so but *seldom*.”

Cleomenes, frowning, goes further: “Nor *at all*, good lady! You might have spoken a *thousand* things that would have done the time more *benefit*!—and graced your *kindness* better!”

Paulina sneers. “You are one of those that would have him *wed* again.”

Lord Dion sees broader issues. “If *you* would not so, you pity not the *state*, nor the remembrance of his most sovereign *name*!—you consider little what *dangers*, by his highness’ fail of issue, may drop upon this *kingdom*, and infect uneasy lookers-on!”—arouse ambition in rival nations’ rulers.

Dion continues: “What were more *holy* than to rejoice that the former queen *is well*?”—in heaven. “What holier than, for *royalty’s repair*—for present *comfort* and *future good*—to *bless* the bed of majesty again with a sweet fellow to’t?”

Paulina is adamant. “There is none *worthy*, compared to her that’s gone!

“Besides which, the *gods* must have their secret purposes *fulfilled*! Has not the divine Apollo said—is’t not the tenor of his oracle—that King Leontes shall not have an heir *till his lost child be found*? That it *shall* be is as monstrous to our human reason as for *my Antigonus* to *break from his grave* and come to *me* again!—he who, on my life, did *perish* with the *infant*!

“’Tis *your* counsel that my lord should to *the heavens* be *contrary*!—oppose against their wills!” She regards Leontes. “Care not about your issue; the *crown* will find an heir! Great Alexander left *his* to ‘the worthiest,’ so that his successor was likely to be the *best*.”

Leontes speaks humbly. “O good Paulina—who holdest the memory of Hermione, I know, in honour—had I squared me to thy counsel *then*, even *now* I might have lookèd full upon *my queen’s eyes*!—have taken *treasure* from her *lips*!”—kisses.

“And left more rich for what they *yielded*!”—Hermione’s wise counsel.

He nods. “Thou speak’st *truth*; no more *such* wives—therefore, *no wife*! One *worse* but *better usèd* would make her sainted *spirit* possess again her *corpse*!—and appear, *soul vexèd*, on this stage where we, offender, are now!—and begin, to me, with ‘*Why?*’”

“Had she such *power*, she had *just cause!*”

“She had!—and would incense me to *murder* her that I married!—and I would *do so!*”

“Were the ghost that walked to say, ‘I bid you mark *her* eye, and tell me for what dull part in’t you chose her!’—then I’d so *shriek* that your ears should *rift* to *hear me!*”

“And *her* words that followed should be, ‘*Remember mine!*’”

Leontes remembers them well: “Stars, *stars!*—all eyes else dead coals!” he sobs. “Fear thou for no wife—I’ll *have* no wife, Paulina!”

She regards him. “Will you *swear* never to marry but by *my* free leave?”

He confirms it: “*Never*, Paulina, as my spirit be blest!”

She tells the courtiers, “Then, good my lords, bear *witness* to his oath!”

Cleomenes frowns. “You tempt him *over-much!*”

Paulina persists. “Unless another as like *Hermione* as is her *picture* confront his eye!”

The nobleman would object. “Good madam—”

“I have done,” says she. “Yet if my lord *will* marry—if you *will*, sir, and no remedy but you will—then give *me* the office to choose a queen *for* you. She shall not be so young as was your former; but she shall be such as, if your first queen’s ghost walked, it should take *joy* to see her in your arms.”

Leontes agrees. “My true Paulina, we shall not marry till thou bid’st us.”

She says, sternly, “That shall be when your *first* queen’s again in breath!—never till *then!*”

The courtiers scowl, but before they can protest further, a gentleman hurries into the throne room and bows before the king. “One that gives himself out as *Prince Florizel*—son of *Polixenes!*—with his *princess*, she the fairest I have yet beheld!—desires access to your high presence!”

Leontes rises, startled and puzzled by the unheralded deputation. “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 *framèd*, but forced by need and accident. What train?”

“But few, and those but lowly.”

“His *princess*, say you, with him?”

The gentleman beams. “*Aye!*—the most peerless piece of earth, I think, that e’er the sun shone bright on!”

Lady Paulina glances sorrowfully upward. “Oh, *Hermione*, as every *present* time doth boast itself above a *better* one gone, so must thy *grave* give way to *what’s seen now!*”

She glares at the gentleman—a poet as well, who had eulogized the queen. “*She* had not been, nor was not *to be, equalled!*—thus *your* verse flowed with her beauty—*once!* Sir, you *yourself* have said and writ so; but your wording now is colder than its theme! ’Tis cruelly *ebbed*, your saying now you have seen a *better!*”

The gentleman bows. “*Pardon*, madam!—for the one I have almost forgot, your *pardon*.”

“But the other, when she has obtained *your* eye, will have your tongue *too!* This is a creature who, would she begin a *sect*, might quench the zeal of all professing *else!*—make *proselytes* of who she but bid follow!”

Paulina scoffs. “What? Not *women!*”

“Women will love her for being more worthy than any *man*; men, for being the rarest of all *women!*”

Leontes turns to his advisor. “Go yourself, Cleomenes; attend our honoured friends, and bring them to our embracement!” The nobleman bows and goes. “Still, ’tis strange he thus should steal upon us....”

Says Paulina, “Had *our* prince, the *jewel* of children, seen this hour, he had comparèd *well* with this lord!—there was not full a month between their births.”

Leontes’ pain grows at the mention of Mamillius. “Prithee, *no more! Cease!* Thou know’st he dies to me *again* when talked of!” He presses his hands to his head. “When I shall *see* this gentleman, thy speech will surely bring me to consider that which may *unfurnish* me of *reason!*”

He watches, trembling, as Cleomenes accompanies Florizel and Perdita into the hall. “They are come....”

And then the king smiles—for the first time in a long time—at the handsome young man. “Your mother was most true to wedlock, prince—for, conceiving *you*, she did print your royal *father* off! Your father’s *image* is so hit in you—his very *air*!—that, were I but twenty-one, I should call you *brother*, as I did *him*, and speak of something wildly by us performed before!”

Leontes embraces Florizel warmly. “Most dearly *welcome!*” He turns now, and gazes upon Perdita. “And *you*, fair princess! O *goddess*, alas, I *lost two* who ’twixt heaven and earth might thus have stood, begetting *wonder*, as you, gracious couple, do!”

He lays a hand on Florizel’s shoulder. “And I then lost—all through *mine own folly!*—the society, *amity*, too, of your brave *father*—whom I, though bearing misery, desire to look upon *once more* in my life!”

Says Florizel, “By *his* command have I here touched Sicilia, and from him give you all greetings that a king, as a *friend*, can send his *brother!* And had not the infirmity which attends worn time somewhat seized his *wishèd* ability, he had *himself* measured the lands and waters ’twixt your throne and his to look upon *you*, whom he loves—he bade me say so—more than *all* those living that bear *other* sceptres!”

Leontes, highly moved, thinks of Polixenes. “O my *brother—good, gentle man!*—the *wrongs* I have done thee stir afresh within me; and these, *thy* especially kind offices, speak to my delaying *slackness!*”

“*Welcome* hither,” he tells the young people, “as is the *spring* to the *earth!*”

The king is entranced with Perdita. “But hath he exposed this paragon to the fearful usage—at least *ungentle!*—of dreadful *Neptune*, to greet a man not worth her pains, much less the adventure of her person?”

“Good my lord, *she* came here from *Libya*,” Florizel tells Leontes.

“Where the warlike Smalus, that noble, honoured lord, is feared and loved?”

“Most royal sir, from *him*—whose *daughter* tears proclaimed *his*, parting with her! From thence we have crossed, a prosperous southern wind being friendly, to execute the charge my father gave me for visiting Your Highness.

“My *best* train I have from your Sicilian shores dismissed,” he claims, to explain his small retinue, “who for Bohemia bend, sir, to report not only my success in Libya, but my arrival, and my wife’s, here where we are in safety.”

“May the blessed gods purge all infection from our climate whilst you draw air here!” Leontes’ smile is tinged with sadness. “You have a father full of *grace*, a holy, gentle man against whose person, sacred as it is, I have done *sin!* For which the heavens, taking angry note, have left *me* issueless, and your father *blest* as he from heaven *merits*—with *you*, worthy of his goodness!”

He looks, sadly, at Polixenes’ grown son and daughter-in-law. “What *might* have been, had I a son and daughter now to look upon?—such goodly things as you....”

Just then a gentleman rushes in, approaches the king and bows. Clearly apprehensive, he blurts out, “Most noble sir, that which I shall *report* would bear no credit, were not the *proof* so nigh!

“Please you, great sir, *Bohemia* greets you from *himself* by me!—desires you to *arrest 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 stares. “*Where’s* Bohemia? *Speak!*”

“*Here in your city!*—I come from him *now!* If I speak *amazèdly*, it *becomes* my marveling at my message!

“Whiles he was hastening to your court—in *chase*, it seems, of this fair couple—on the way he met the *father* of this *seeming* lady, and her *brother*, both having quit their country with this young prince!”

Florizel is appalled. “*Camillo*—whose honour and whose honesty till *now* endured all weathers—has *betrayed me!*”

“Lay’t so to *his* charge!”—tell him so, says the Sicilian courtier. “He’s *with* the king your father!”

Leontes is again startled. “Who? *Camillo?*”

“*Camillo*, sir!—I *spake* with him; he now is questioning those poor men! 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 with *divers deaths-in-death!*”

“Oh, my poor father!” moans Perdita. “The *heavens* have set spies upon us!—will not have our contract *celebrated!*”

Now Leontes frowns. “Are you *married?*” he demands.

“We are not, sir,” Florizel confesses, “nor are we likely to be! I can see that the *stars* will kiss the *valleys* first! For us, high and low,”—prince and commoner, “the odds are *alike!*”

Again Leontes challenges: “My lord, *is* this the daughter of a *king?*”

“She *is*—once she’s *my wife!*”

“Judging by your good *father’s* speed, I’d say that ‘once’ will come along *very slowly!*”

“I am most sorry that you have broken from his liking, where you were tied by *duty!*—and sorry that your choice is not as rich in *worth* as in *beauty*; so that you might well enjoy her.”

Florizel takes Perdita by the hand. “Dear, *look up!* Though *Fortune* should chase us with my father as a *visible* enemy, she hath no jot of power to *change our loves!*”

He turns to Leontes. “Beseech you, sir, *remember* when you owed no more to time than I do now; with thought of such affections, step forth as *mine advocate!*—at *your* request, my father will grant precious things as he would trifles!”

Leontes cannot stop watching Perdita—who closely resembles Hermione. “Would he do so, I’d beg your precious mistress, whom he does count but a *trifle.*”

Paulina is irked. “*Sir!*—my *liege*, your eye hath too much *youth* in’t! Not a month ’fore your queen died she was *more worthy* such gazes than what you look on now!”

The king nods. He says softly, “Even in these looks I made, I thought of *her.*”

“But your petition is yet unanswered,” he tells Florizel. “I *will* speak to your father! Your *honour* not having been o’erthrown by your *desires*, I am *friend* to them and you!”

“Upon which errand I now go; therefore follow me. Come, good my lord!”

Straightening his royal robes, he leads the way.

A group of courtiers emerges from the Sicilian palace in animated conversation, still stirred by poignant and portentous events.

Outside, before the broad marble portico, one is intercepted by a visitor from the Prince of Bohemia’s ship—Autolycus, who craves information. “Beseech you, sir, were you present at this revelation?” he asks.

The portly gentleman is eager to talk. “I was by at the *opening* of the *fardel!*—heard the old shepherd deliver the manner how he *found* it!” His face reveals annoyance. “Whereupon, after a little amazedness, we were all *commanded out of the chamber!* But this methought I heard: the shepherd saying he *found the child!*”

“I would most gladly know the issue of it!” says Autolycus.

“I can make but a broken delivery of the business. The exchanges I perceived between the king and *Camillo* were very *notes* of *admiration!*—staring at one another, their eyes seemed almost to start from the cases! There was *speech* in their silence, *language* in their very *gestures*; they looked as if they had heard of a *world* destroyed—or one *ransomèd!* A discernible passion of *wonder* appeared in them!”

“Not even the *wisest* beholder, knowing no more than was *seen*, could say if the import were *joy* or *sorrow!*—but in the extremity of one it must needs be!”

He looks back as another courtier rushes from the palace's wide entrance. "Here comes a gentleman that haply knows more. . . . *The news, Rogerio?*"

"*Nothing but bonfires!*"—public celebrations, the tall man reports happily. "The *oracle* is fulfilled: *the king's daughter is found!*"

"So great a deal of wonder has broken out within *this* hour that *ballad*-makers may not be able to express it!" He looks toward the graybeard hastily following him. "Here comes the Lady Paulina's steward—he can deliver you more!"

"How goes it *now*, sir?" he asks the man. "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*?"

Grasping the younger man's sleeve, the blissful steward nods, "*Most* true, if ever *truth* were pregnant with *evidence*! That which you *hear* you'll swear you've *seen*, there is such unity in the *proofs*!—the green *mantle*, Queen *Hermione*'s, her *jewels* about the neck of it—the *letters* of Antigonus found with it, which they know to be in his handwriting—the *majesty* of the young creature and *resemblance* to the *mother*—the effects of *nobleness*, which nature shows to be above her rearing—and many other circumstances *proclaim* her, with all *certainty*, to be the king's daughter!"

"Did you see the *meeting* of the two kings?" asks Rogerio.

"No."

"Then have you lost a sight which was *to be seen*!—cannot be *spoken*! There might you have beheld *one joy* crown *another*!—and in such a manner that it seemed *Sorrow* wept to take *leave* of them, for the *joys* waded in *tears*!"

"There was casting up of *eyes*, holding up of *hands*!—with *countenances* in such distraction that they were to be known by *garment*, not by *face*!"

"*Our* king, being ready to *leap out of himself* for joy at finding his daughter, *now*, as if that joy were become a *loss*, cries out, 'Oh, thy *mother*, thy *mother*!'—then asks Bohemia's *forgiveness*—then embraces his son-in-law—then *again* harries his daughter with *hugging* her—and now he thanks the old *shepherd*!—who stands by like a *fountain*, weather-bitten through many kings' reigns!"

"I never *heard* of another encounter such as this!—which *lames* the report trying to *follow* it, and *undoes* description in *doing* it!"

The tall courtier asks, "What, pray you, became of *Antigonus*, who carried the child hence?"

"Again 'tis like an *old tale*—which *will* have matter to rehearse, though *credit* be asleep and not an eye open," says the old man. "*He was torn to pieces by a bear*!—thus 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."

"What became of his bark and his followers?" asks the stout gentleman.

"*Wrecked*!—the same instant of their master's death," the steward tells them gravely, "and in the view of the shepherd. So all of the instruments which aided in exposing the child were *lost*, even then when *it was found*!"

"But, *oh*, the noble combat that 'twixt joy and sorrow was fought in *Paulina*! She had eyes first *declinèd* for the loss of her *husband*—then *elevated* that the oracle was *fulfilled*! She lifted the princess from the earth and *locked her in embracing*!—as if she would pin her to her *heart*, so that she might no more be in danger of losing!"

The younger gentleman marvels. "The dignity of *this* pageant was worthy the *audience* of kings and princes!—for by such was it *acted*!"

Again the old steward nods—and remembers tearfully. "One of the most touching sights of all—and that which, dangling in mine eyes, caught the *water*, if not the fish—was when, at the relation of the queen's death—with the *manner* how she came to't *confessèd bravely*, and *lamented* by the king—attentiveness *wounded his daughter*, till from *one* sigh of dolour to *another* she did—with an *Alas*! I would fain say it: *bleed* tears!—for I am sure *my heart wept blood*!"

“Whoever was most *marble* then changèd *colour!*—some *swooned*, all *sorrowed!* If all the *world* could have seen’t, the woe had been *universal!*”

“Are they returnèd to the court?”

“No—the *princess* hearing of her mother’s *statue* which is in the keeping of Paulina—a work many years in doing, and now newly completed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who—had he *eternity*, and could he put *breath* into his piece—would beguile *Nature* from her custom,”—accepting her own work, “so perfectly is he her surrogate!

“He so *near to* Hermione hath done ‘Hermione’ that they say one would *speak* to her, and stand in hope of *answer!*”

“Thither, all in readiness for its reception, are they gone; and there they intend to sup.”

“I *thought* Paulina had some great matter there in hand,” says the taller gentleman, “for she hath privately, twice or thrice a day ever since the death of Hermione, visited that removèd house. Shall we thither, and with our company add to the rejoicing?”

“Who that has the benefit of access would *not* be thence? Every wink of an eye, some new grace will be born!” says his companion. “Our absence makes us unthrifty to our knowledge! Let’s along!”

The three courtiers stride away toward Paulina’s home, leaving the erstwhile peddler behind.

Thinks Autolycus ruefully, *Now, had I not the stain of my former life on me, would preferment drop on my head!*

I took the old man and his son aboard to the prince—told him I heard them talk of a fardel, and I knew not what. But, overly fond of the shepherd’s daughter—at that time, so he then took her to be—who began to be much sea-sick, he found himself little better! Extremity of weather continuing, this mystery remained undiscoverèd.

But ’tis all one to me, for had I been the finder-out of this secret, it would not have pleased, given my earlier discredits.

He watches as two of his fellow passengers, the Bohemian shepherds, walk from the palace together, deep in conversation—and in costly new clothes. *Here come those I have done good to against my will—and already appearing in the blossoms of their fortune!*

“Come, boy,” says the old man. “I am past more children, but *thy* sons and daughters will be *gentleman-born!*”

The son spots Autolycus. “*You* are well met, sir!” he says angrily. “You denied to *fight* with me this other day, because I was not *gentleman-born!* See you these clothes? *Say* that you see *them* and *still* think me not *gentleman-born!*” he demands defiantly. “You were best not say *these robes* are not *gentlemen-born!* Give me the *lie!*—*do*, and *find out* whether I am not now *gentleman-born!*”

Autolycus bows graciously. “I know, sir, you are *now* born a gentleman.”

“*Aye!*—and have been so any time these *four hours!*” the youth proclaims proudly.

“And so have *I*, boy!” notes his father.

“So you have! But I was *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!”

The old man beams. “We may live, son, to shed many more!”

“*Aye!*—or else ’twere hard luck, being in so preposterous estate as *we* are!”

Autolycus addresses the younger of the newly elevated pair. “I humbly beseech you, sir, to *pardon* me all the faults I have committed to Your Worship, and to give your *good* report of me to the prince, thy master.”

“Prithee, son, *do*,” urges the kindly old shepherd, “for we must *be* gentle, now we are gentlemen.”

The younger one regards the rogue. “Thou wilt *amend* thy life?”

Autolycus immediately bows, humbly. “*Aye*, an it like Your Good Worship!”

The young shepherd is pleased. "Give me thy hand!" They shake. "I will swear to the prince thou art as honest a true a fellow as any is in Bohemia!"

The older man raises an eyebrow. "You may *say* it, but not *swear* it."

"Not swear it, now I am a *gentleman*? Let boors and franklins"—peasants and yeomen—"say it—I'll *swear* it!"

"How if it be false, son?"

"Even if it be *ever* so false, a true *gentleman* may swear it in the behalf of his *friend*!" He smiles kindly at Autolycus. "And I'll swear to the prince thou art a *tall* fellow of thy hands,"—honorable in accord with his stature, "and that thou wilt not be drunk.

"I know thou wert *no* tall fellow of thy hands, and that thou *wilt* be drunk! Yet I'll swear it—as I would thou wouldst *be* a tall fellow of thy hands."

"I will prove so, sir, to my power!"

The shepherd laughs. "Aye!—by *any means* prove a tall fellow!" He regards the slender man, smaller, yet bold. "If I don't 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!" He claps an arm around the rascal's shoulders.

"Come, follow *us*! *We'll* be thy good masters!"

Chapter Ten Artful Restoration

Lady Paulina welcomes a royal party into her home: King Leontes and King Polixenes; Prince Florizel with Perdita, his affianced; Lord Camillo and several other courtiers, all with attendants. Following at a respectful distance are the two freshly minted gentlemen and their new serving-man.

They stroll through several rooms dedicated to the lady's impressive collection of paintings and statuary, and find, in the last chamber, musicians quietly playing hautboys and flutes.

Says Leontes happily—but with a trace of irony, "O grave and good Paulina, the great *comfort* that I have had of thee!"

"Sovereign sir, what, I *did* not well, I *meant* well," she replies. "All my services you have paid home!" she says, having witnessed his daughter's joyful return. "And that you have vouchsafed to visit my poor house—with your crownèd brother and these, your contracted heirs of your kingdoms—is a *surplus* of your grace, which never my life may last to answer!"

Says Leontes apologetically, aware of the number of visitors, "Ah, Paulina, we honour you with *trouble*. But we came to see the statue of our queen; your gallery have we passèd through, much contented with its many singularities, but we saw not that which my daughter came to look upon: the statue of *her mother*."

"As she lived *peerless*, so her dead likeness, I do well believe, excels whatever yet you looked upon—or hand of man hath done!" says Paulina. "Therefore I keep it lonely, apart." She stands before a curtained alcove. "But here it is; prepare to see a life as lively imitated as ever still sleep mockèd death! Behold, and say 'tis well!"

She draws back the drapery, revealing the newly painted statue of Queen Hermione; softly lighted by candles, one at each side, it stands quite lifelike on the plinth. The guests who knew her gaze up, amazed.

"I like your silence," says Paulina. "It the more shows off your *wonder*! But yet speak; first, you, my liege. Comes it not something near?"

Leontes, blinking, stares. "Her natural posture! *Chide* me, dear stone, so that I may say indeed thou *art* Hermione!" Tears blur his vision. "Or rather, thou art she in thy *not* chiding—for she was as tender as infancy and grace!"

He wipes his eyes, and compares the image to that still lively in his memory. “But yet, Paulina, Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing so aged as this seems....”

Polixenes, studying the statue, concurs. “Oh, not by *much*.”

Says Paulina, “So much the more our *carver’s excellence*, which lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her look as if she lives *now*.”

Leontes is again stricken with deep regret. “And as now she might have *seen*—as much as was to my *good comfort* as is now *piercing to my soul*! Oh, thus she stood, with even such *majesty of life*!—life as *warm* when first I wooed her as now it *coldly* stands!”

Tears again flow. “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 my evils conjured to remembrance—and taken the spirit from thy admiring *daughter*, standing like stone *with* thee!”

Perdita is indeed entranced by the image of her mother. “Give me leave!—and do not say ’tis in *superstition* that I kneel, and then implore her *blessing*.” She moves toward the figure. “Lady, dear queen, who ended when I but began, give me that hand of yours to kiss....”

Paulina intervenes. “Oh, *patience*! The statue is but newly fixèd—the colour’s not dry!”

Camillo pities Leontes, who is quietly weeping. “My lord, the sorrow was *too sorely laid on* that *sixteen winters* cannot blow away, so many summers *dry*! Scarce did ever any *joy* live so long; no *sorrow* but killed itself much *sooner*!”

And Polixenes touches the other king’s arm. “Dear my brother, let him that was the *cause* of this grief have power to *take off* so much from you as he will piece up in *himself*!”

Paulina moves toward the alcove. “Indeed, my lord, if I had thought the sight of my poor image—for the *stone* of it is mine—would thus have *wrought you*, I’d not have showed it.”

“Do not draw the curtain!” cries Leontes.

But Paulina reaches to close the drape. “No longer shall you gaze on’t, lest your fancy may think anon it *moves*!”

“Let be, let *be*!” pleads Leontes urgently. “Would I were dead if methinks not that *already*! Who was he that did make it?” The king points. “*See*, my lord!—would you not deem that it *breathed*?—and that those veins did verily *bear blood*?”

Polixenes nods. “*Masterly* done! A very *life* seems warm upon her lip!”

Like the others, Leontes now stands transfixed, motionless. He whispers: “The feature of *her* eye has *motion* in’t—and *we* are mocked as *art*!”

“I’ll draw the curtain,” says Paulina. “My lord’s almost so far transported that he’ll think anon it *lives*!”

Leontes steps toward the statue. “Oh, sweet Paulina, *make* me to think so!—for *twenty years together*!”—the rest of his life. “No *settled* senses in the world can match the pleasure of *that* madness! Let it alone!”

Paulina faces him. “I am sorry, sir, I have thus far *stirred* you! Yet I *could* afflict you *further*....”

“*Do*, Paulina!—for *this* affliction has a taste as sweet as any cordial comfort!”

He moves closer. “Methinks still that there is an *air* comes from her,” he murmurs. “What fine chisel could ever yet cut *breath*?” Suddenly he decides: “Let no man *mock* me, but I will *kiss* her!”

“Good my lord, *forbear*!” protests Paulina, blocking his way. “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?”

“*No*, not these *twenty years*!” cries Leontes.

Perdita nods. “So long could *I* stand by, a *looker-on*!”

“Either forbear, and immediately quit the chapel,” says Paulina, “or resolve you for *more amazement*!”

“If you can bear to *behold* it, I’ll make the statue *move* indeed!—descend and *take you by the hand*! But then you’ll think—which I *protest* against—I am assisted by *wicked* powers!”

Leontes, pale, cannot abandon the image of Hermione. “What you can make her *do*, I am content to *look* upon—what to *speak*, I am content to *hear*—for ’tis as easy to make her speak as move!”

Paulina tells the visitors, “It is required that you do awake your *faith!* Then all *stand still!*”

“As for those who think it is *unlawful* business I am about, let them depart.”

“*Proceed!*” commands Leontes. “No foot shall stir!”

Paulina turns. “Music, *awake* her! *Strike!*” A tabor is sounded, and the other musicians comply as well.

“’Tis *time*,” says Paulina softly. “*Descend*—be *stone* no more! Approach!—strike with marvel all that look upon thee!” she tells the statue, tearfully. “Come; *I’ll* fill up your grave.

“*Stir!* Nay, *come away!*—bequeath to Death your numbness, for from him dear *Life* redeems you!” She reaches up.

And the statue moves.

“You perceive *she stirs!*” cries Paulina, as Queen Hermione takes her hand and steps down from the pedestal.

The others back away. “Start not,” says Paulina. “Her actions shall be *holy!*—and you’ll hear that my spell is lawful! Do not shun her until you see her *die* again, or else you kill her *doubly!*” She turns to Leontes, who seems frozen. “Nay, *present your hand!* When she was *young* you *wooed* her; now in age is *she* become the suitor?”

Leontes takes Hermione’s hand. “*Oh*,” he gasps, “she’s *warm!*” Again he blinks. “If this be *magic*, let it be an art as lawful as *eating!*”

Polixenes, delighted, watches the royal pair. “She *embraces* him!”

“She hangs about his neck!” notes Camillo. “If she *moves* as living, let her *speak*, too!”

“Aye, and make’t manifest *where she has lived*,” says Polixenes, “or how been stolen from the *dead!*”

Paulina quiets them. “That she is *living*, were it but *told* you, would be hooted at like an old tale! But, though yet she speaks not, it is *apparent* that she lives! *Mark* a little while.”

She turns to Perdita. “Please *you* to interpose, fair madam! Kneel, and ask for *your mother’s blessing!*” She addresses her friend the queen. “Turn, good lady; our *lost one* is *found!*”

Hermione looks upward and speaks. “You *gods*, look down, and from your sacred vials pour your graces upon my daughter’s head!”

She takes the astonished Perdita’s hand, and embraces her. “*Tell* me, mine own, where hast thou been preservèd?—where lived—how found thy father’s court!

“For thou shalt hear that *I*, knowing by Paulina that *the oracle gave hope* thou wast in being, have preservèd myself to see the outcome!”

Paulina tells her, postponing explanations, “There’s time *enough* for that, lest they desire upon this push to trouble your joys with *like* relation!” She motions to urge the guests from the gallery. “Go together, you precious winners all!—your exultation partake of, every one!

“I, an old turtledove, will wing me to some withered bough, and there my mate, that’s never to be found again, lament till *I* am lost.”

But Leontes, holding Hermione’s hand, has resumed command. “Oh, *peace*, Paulina! Thou shouldst a *husband* take—by *my* consent, as I by *thine* take a wife!

“This is the *match* made between us by *vow!* Thou hast found *mine*—if *how* is yet to be explained; for I saw her, as I thought, dead, and have in vain said many a prayer upon her grave.

“But to find thee an honourable husband I need not seek far for him—I partly *know* his mind!

“Come, *Camillo*, and take her by the hand whose *worth* and *honesty* are richly noted!—and here justifièd by *us*, a *pair of kings!*” Polixenes smiles and nods. “Let’s from this place!”

Hermione seems to hold back.

Leontes asks, gently “What? Look upon *my brother*. I beseech *both* your pardons,” he says, touching Polixenes’ sleeve, “that e’er I put between your holy looks my ill suspicion!”

He goes to Florizel. “This is *son* unto this *king*,” he tells Hermione, “troth-plight to *your daughter*—and, heavens directing, *our son-in-law*!”

“Good Paulina, lead us from hence, where we may leisurely, each one, demand an answer to the others’ parts, performèd in this wide gap of time since first we were dissevered!

“Hastily lead away!”