CYMBELINE
The scene: Britain and Rome

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Cymbeline, king of Britain
Cloten, son to the Queen by a former husband
Posthumus Leonatus, a gentleman, husband to Imogen
Belarius, a banished lord, disguised under the name of Morgan
Guiderius, sons to Cymbeline, disguised under the names of Polydore and Cadwal, supposed sons to Morgan
Arviragus
Philario, friend to Posthumus
Jachimo, friend to Philario
Italians
Caius Lucius, general of the Roman forces
Pisanio, servant to Posthumus
Cornelius, a physician
A Roman Captain
Two British Captains
A Frenchman, friend to Philario
Two Lords of Cymbeline’s court
Two Gentlemen of the same
Two Gaolers

Queen, wife to Cymbeline
Imogen, daughter to Cymbeline by a former queen
Helen, a lady attending on Imogen

Lords, Ladies, Roman Senators, Tribunes, a Soothsayer, a Dutchman, a Spaniard, Musicians, Officers, Captains, Soldiers, Messengers, and other Attendants, Apparitions
[I. i.] Britain. The garden of Cymbeline's palace

Enter two Gentlemen

1 Gentleman. You do not meet a man but frowns. Our bloods
No more obey the heavens than our courtiers
Still seem as does the king.

2 Gentleman. But what's the matter?

1 Gentleman. His daughter, and the heir of's kingdom, whom
He purposed to his wife's sole son—a widow
That late he married—hath referred herself
Unto a poor but worthy gentleman. She's wedded;
Her husband banished; she imprisoned. All
Is outward sorrow, though I think the king
Be touched at very heart.

2 Gentleman. None but the king? 10

1 Gentleman. He that hath lost her too. So is the queen,
That most desired the match. But not a courtier,
Although they wear their faces to the bent
Of the king's looks, hath a heart that is not
Glad of the thing they scowl at.

2 Gentleman. And why so?

1 Gentleman. He that hath missed the princess is a thing
Too bad for bad report; and he that hath her—
I mean, that married her, alack, good man!
And therefore banished—is a creature such
20 As, to seek through the regions of the earth
For one his like, there would be something failing
In him that should compare. I do not think
So fair an outward and such stuff within
Endows a man but he.

2 Gentleman. You speak him far.
1 Gentleman. I do extend him, sir, within himself;
Crush him together, rather than unfold
His measure duly.

2 Gentleman. What’s his name and birth?
1 Gentleman. I cannot delve him to the root.

His father
Was called Sicilius, who did join his honour

30 Against the Romans with Cassibelan,
But had his titles by Tenantius, whom
He served with glory and admired success,
So gained the sur-addition Leonatus;
And had, besides this gentleman in question,
Two other sons, who in the wars o’th’time
Died with their swords in hand; for which their father,
Then old and fond of issue, took such sorrow
That he quit being; and his gentle lady,
Big of this gentleman, our theme, deceased

40 As he was born. The king he takes the babe
To his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus,
Breeds him and makes him of his bed-chamber,
Puts to him all the learnings that his time
Could make him the receiver of, which he took
As we do air, fast as ’twas minist’red,
And in’s spring became a harvest; lived in court—
Which rare it is to do—most praised, most loved;
A sample to the youngest, to th’more mature
A glass that feasted them, and to the graver

A child that guided dotards. To his mistress,
1.1.51

CYMBELINE

For whom he now is banished, her own price
Proclaims how she esteemed him; and his virtue
By her election may be truly read,
What kind of man he is.

2 Gentleman. I honour him
Even out of your report. But pray you tell me,
Is she sole child to th’king?

1 Gentleman. His only child.
He had two sons—if this be worth your hearing,
Mark it—the eldest of them at three years old,
I’th’swathing clothes the other, from their nursery
Were stol’n, and to this hour no guess in knowledge
Which way they went.

2 Gentleman. How long is this ago?

1 Gentleman. Some twenty years.

2 Gentleman. That a king’s children should be
so conveyed,
So slackly guarded, and the search so slow
That could not trace them!

1 Gentleman. Howso’er ’tis strange,
Or that the negligence may well be laughed at,
Yet is it true, sir.

2 Gentleman. I do well believe you.

1 Gentleman. We must forbear. Here comes
the gentleman,
The queen and princess. [they go

Enter the Queen, POSTHUMUS and IMOGEN

Queen. No, be assured you shall not find me, daughter,
After the slander of most stepmothers,
Evil-eyed unto you. You’re my prisoner, but
Your gaoler shall deliver you the keys
That lock up your restraint. For you, Posthumus,
So soon as I can win th’offended king,
I will be known your advocate. Marry, yet
The fire of rage is in him, and 'twere good
You leaned unto his sentence with what patience
Your wisdom may inform you.

Posthumus. Please your highness,

80 I will from hence to-day.

Queen. You know the peril.
I'll fetch a turn about the garden, pitying
The pangs of barred affections, though the king
Hath charged you should not speak together. [she goes

Imogen.

O
Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant
Can tickle where she wounds! My dearest husband,
I something fear my father's wrath, but nothing—
Always reserved my holy duty—what
His rage can do on me. You must be gone,
And I shall here abide the hourly shot

90 Of angry eyes, not comforted to live,
But that there is this jewel in the world
That I may see again.

Posthumus. My queen, my mistress:
O lady, weep no more, lest I give cause
To be suspected of more tenderness
Than doth become a man. I will remain
The loyal'st husband that did e'er plight troth.
My residence in Rome at one Philario's,
Who to my father was a friend, to me
Known but by letter; thither write, my queen,

100 And with mine eyes I'll drink the words you send,
Though ink be made of gall.

Re-enter Queen

Queen. Be brief, I pray you.
If the king come, I shall incur I know not
1.1.103  CYMBELINE

How much of his displeasure.  [aside] Yet I'll move him
To walk this way.  I never do him wrong
But he does buy my injuries, to be friends;
Pays dear for my offences.  [she goes

Posthumus.  Should we be taking leave
As long a term as yet we have to live,
The loathness to depart would grow.  Adieu!

Imogen.  Nay, stay a little.
Were you but riding forth to air yourself,
Such parting were too petty.  Look here, love:
This diamond was my mother's; take it, heart;
But keep it till you woo another wife,
When Imogen is dead.

Posthumus.  How, how? another?
You gentle gods, give me but this I have,
And cere up my embraces from a next
With bonds of death.  [putting on the ring.]  Remain,
remain thou here
While sense can keep it on.  And, sweetest, fairest,
As I my poor self did exchange for you
To your so infinite loss, so in our trifles
I still win of you.  For my sake wear this;
It is a manacle of love; I'll place it
Upon this fairest prisoner.

Imogen.  [putting a bracelet on her arm

O the gods!

When shall we see again?

Enter CYMBELINE and Lords

Posthumus.  Alack, the king!

Cymbeline.  Thou basest thing, avoid hence, from
my sight!

If after this command thou fraught the court
With thy unworthiness, thou diest. Away!
Thou’rt poison to my blood.

Posthumus. The gods protect you,
And bless the good remainders of the court.

I am gone. [he goes

Imogen. There cannot be a pinch in death
More sharp than this is.

Cymbeline. O disloyal thing,
That shouldst repair my youth, thou heap’st
A year’s age on me.

Imogen. I beseech you, sir,
Harm not yourself with your vexation.
I am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare
Subdues all pangs, all fears.

Cymbeline. Past grace? obedience?
Imogen. Past hope, and in despair; that way
past grace.

Cymbeline. That mightst have had the sole son of
my queen!

Imogen. O blessed, that I might not; I chose
an eagle,

And did avoid a puttock.

Cymbeline. Thou took’st a beggar, wouldst have
made my throne
A seat for baseness.

Imogen. No, I rather added
A lustre to it.

Cymbeline. O thou vile one!

Imogen. Sir,
It is your fault that I have loved Posthumus:
You bred him as my playfellow, and he is
A man worth any woman; overbuys me
Almost the sum he pays.

Cymbeline. What, art thou mad?
Cymbeline

1.1.148

Imogen. Almost, sir. Heaven restore me! Would I were
A neat-herd’s daughter, and my Leonatus
Our neighbour shepherd’s son!

Re-enter Queen

Cymbeline. Thou foolish thing! [to the Queen] They were again together; you have done
Not after our command. Away with her,
And pen her up.

Queen. Beseech your patience. Peace,
Dear lady daughter, peace! Sweet sovereign,
Leave us to ourselves, and make yourself some comfort
Out of your best advice.

Cymbeline. Nay, let her languish
A drop of blood a day; and, being aged,
Die of this folly. [Cymbeline and lords go

Enter PISANIO

Queen. Fie, you must give way.
Here is your servant. How now, sir? What news?
Pisano. My lord your son drew on my master.
Queen. Ha? No harm, I trust, is done?
Pisano. There might have been,
But that my master rather played than fought,
And had no help of anger; they were parted
By gentlemen at hand.
Queen. I am very glad on’t.
Imogen. Your son’s my father’s friend; he takes his part
To draw upon an exile. O brave sir!
I would they were in Afric both together;
Myself by with a needle, that I might prick
The goer-back. Why came you from your master?
170 Pisario. On his command. He would not suffer me
To bring him to the haven; left these notes
Of what commands I should be subject to
When’t pleased you to employ me.
Queen. This hath been
Your faithful servant. I dare lay mine honour
He will remain so.

Pisario. I humbly thank your highness.
Queen. Pray walk awhile.
Imogen. About some half-hour hence, pray you
speak with me.
You shall at least go see my lord aboard.
For this time leave me. [they go

[1. 2.] The same. A public place

Enter Clooten and two Lords

1 Lord. Sir, I would advise you to shift a shirt; the
violence of action hath made you reek as a sacrifice.
Where air comes out, air comes in; there’s none abroad
so wholesome as that you vent.

Clooten. If my shirt were bloody, then to shift it.
Have I hurt him?

(2 Lord. No, faith; not so much as his patience.

1 Lord. Hurt him? his body’s a passable carcass, if
he be not hurt. It is a throughfare for steel, if it be
not hurt.

(2 Lord. His steel was in debt; it went o’th’backside
the town.

Clooten. The villain would not stand me.

(2 Lord. No, but he fled forward still, toward your
face.