

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00611-8 - The Winter's Tale, Volume 39

William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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THE WINTER'S TALE

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The scene: now in Sicilia, now in Bohemia

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

LEONTES, *King of Sicilia*

MAMILLIUS, *young Prince of Sicilia*

CAMILLO	} <i>four Lords of Sicilia</i>
ANTIGONUS	
CLEOMENES	
DION	

POLIXENES, *King of Bohemia*

FLORIZEL, *Prince of Bohemia*

ARCHIDAMUS, *a Lord of Bohemia*

OLD SHEPHERD, *reputed father of Perdita*

CLOWN, *his son*

AUTOLYCUS, *a rogue*

A Mariner

A Gaoler

HERMIONE, *Queen to Leontes*

PERDITA, *daughter to Leontes and Hermione*

PAULINA, *wife to Antigonus*

EMILIA, *a Lady*

MOPSA	} <i>shepherdesses</i>
DORCAS	

*Other Lords and Gentlemen, Ladies, Officers and Servants,
 Shepherds and Shepherdesses*

TIME, *as Chorus*

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[1. 1.] *Sicilia. A long gallery in the palace of Leontes, with doors at either end; chairs, tables, etc.*

'Enter CAMILLO and ARCHIDAMUS'

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

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

Archidamus. Wherein our entertainment shall shame us: we will be justified in our loves: for, indeed...

Camillo. Beseech you...

10

Archidamus. Verily I speak it in the freedom of my knowledge: we cannot with such magnificence...in so rare...I know not what to say...We will give you sleepy drinks, that your senses (unintelligent of our insufficiency) may, though they cannot praise us, as little accuse us.

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

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

Camillo. Sicilia cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia...They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now. Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters (though not personal) have been royally attorneyed with interchange of gifts, letters,

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loving embassies—that they have seemed to be together,
though absent; shook hands, as over a vast; and embraced
as it were from the ends of opposed winds. The heavens
30 continue their loves.

Archidamus. I think there is not in the world, either
malice or matter, to alter it... You have an unspeakable
comfort of your young prince Mamillius: it is a gentle-
man of the greatest promise that ever came into my note.

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

Archidamus. Would they else be content to die?

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

Archidamus. If the king had no son, they would desire to
live on crutches till he had one. [*they pass out of hearing*

[1. 2.] *'Enter LEONTES, HERMIONE, MAMILLIUS,
POLIXENES,' and attendants; Leontes, Hermione and
Polixenes sit, Mamillius plays with toys*

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

Leontes. Stay your thanks a while,

10 And pay them when you part.

Polixenes. Sir, that's to-morrow...

I am questioned by my fears, of what may chance

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Or breed upon our absence, that may blow
 No sneaping winds at home, to make us say
 'This is put forth too truly'...Besides, I have stayed
 To tire your royalty.

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

Polixenes. No longer stay.

Leontes. One se'nnight longer.

Polixenes. Very sooth, to-morrow.

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

Polixenes. Press me not, beseech you, so:
 There is no tongue that moves...none, none i'th' world, 20
 So soon as yours, could win me: so it should now,
 Were there necessity in your request, although
 'Twere needful I denied it. My affairs
 Do even drag me homeward: which to hinder
 Were (in your love) a whip to me; my stay,
 To you a charge and trouble: to save both,
 Farewell, our brother.

Leontes. Tongue-tied, our queen? speak you.

Hermione. I had thought, sir, to have held my peace,
 until

You had drawn oaths from him not to stay: you, sir,
 Charge him too coldly. Tell him, you are sure 30
 All in Bohemia's well: this satisfaction
 The by-gone day proclaimed—say this to him,
 He's beat from his best ward.

Leontes. Well said, Hermione.

Hermione. To tell, he longs to see his son, were strong:
 But let him say so then, and let him go;
 But let him swear so, and he shall not stay,
 We'll thwack him hence with distaffs....
 [to *Polixenes*] Yet of your royal presence I'll adventure

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6 THE WINTER'S TALE 1.2.39

The borrow of a week. When at Bohemia
 40 You take my lord, I'll give him my commission
 To let him there a month behind the gest
 Prefixed for's parting: yet, good deed, Leontes,
 I love thee not a jar o'th' clock behind
 What Lady She her lord....You'll stay?

[*Leontes rises and draws apart, observing
 Hermione and Polixenes unobserved*]

Polixenes. No, madam.

Hermione. Nay, but you will?

Polixenes. I may not, verily.

Hermione. 'Verily!'

You put me off with limber vows: but I,
 Though you would seek t'unsphere the stars with oaths,
 Should yet say, 'Sir, no going'...Verily
 50 You shall not go; a lady's Verily 'is
 As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?
 Force me to keep you as a prisoner,
 Not like a guest; so you shall pay your fees
 When you depart, and save your thanks. How say you?
 My prisoner? or my guest? by your dread Verily,
 One of them you shall be.

Polixenes. Your guest then, madam:
 To be your prisoner should import offending;
 Which is for me less easy to commit
 Than you to punish.

Hermione. Not your gaoler then,
 60 But your kind hostess....Come, I'll question you
 Of my lord's tricks and yours, when you were boys:
 You were pretty lordings then?

Polixenes. We were, fair queen,
 Two lads, that thought there was no more behind,
 But such a day to-morrow, as to-day,
 And to be boy eternal.

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Hermione. Was not my lord
The verier wag o'th' two?

Polixenes. We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk
i'th' sun,

And bleat the one at th'other: what we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed 70
That any did...Had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
Boldly 'not guilty'; the imposition cleared,
Hereditary ours.

Hermione. By this we gather
You have tripped since.

Polixenes. O my most sacred lady,
Temptations have since then been born to's: for
In those unfledged days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not crossed the eyes
Of my young play-fellow.

Hermione. Grace to boot! 80
Of this make no conclusion, lest you say
Your queen and I are devils: yet, go on,

[*Leontes comes softly forward from behind, unseen*
Th'offences we have made you do we'll answer,
If you first sinned with us; and that with us
You did continue fault; and that you slipped not
With any, but with us.

Leontes. Is he won yet?

Hermione [*turns*]. He'll stay, my lord.

[*Leontes.* At my request he would not...
[*aloud*] *Hermione*, my dearest, thou never spok'st
To better purpose.

Hermione. Never?

Leontes. Never, but once.

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90 *Hermione*. What? have I twice said well? when was't
before?

I prithee tell me: cram's with praise, and make's
As fat as tame things: one good deed, dying tongueless,
Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.

Our praises are our wages: you may ride's

With one soft kiss a thousand furlongs ere

With spur we heat an acre. But to th' goal:

My last good deed was to entreat his stay;

What was my first? it has an elder sister,

Or I mistake you: O, would her name were Grace!

100 But once before I spoke to th' purpose? When?

Nay, let me have't: I long.

Leontes.

Why, that was when

Three crabbéd months had soured themselves to death,

Ere I could make thee open thy white hand,

And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter

'I am yours for ever.'

Hermione.

'Tis Grace, indeed....

Why, lo you now, I have spoke to th' purpose twice:

The one, for ever earned a royal husband;

Th'other, for some while a friend.

[*she gives her hand to Polixenes; they
rise and talk apart*]

(*Leontes [sits, watching them]*). Too hot, too hot:

To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods.

110 I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances,

But not for joy; not joy.... This entertainment

May a free face put on; derive a liberty

From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,

And well become the agent: 't may; I grant:

But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,

As now they are, and making practised smiles

As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere

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The mort o'th' deer; O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows....Mamillius,
Art thou my boy?

Mamillius [*looks up from play*]. Ay, my good lord.

Leontes. I'fecks! 120

Why, that's my bawcock....What! hast smutched thy
nose?

'They say it is a copy out of mine....[*he wipes the boy's face*]
Come, captain,

We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain:

And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf,

Are all called 'neat'....Still virginaling

Upon his palm....How now, you wanton calf?

Art thou my calf?

Mamillius. Yes, if you will, my lord.

Leontes. Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that
I have,

To be full like me: yet they say we are

Almost as like as eggs; women say so 130

(That will say any thing!) but were they false

As o'er-dyed blacks, as wind, as waters; false

As dice are to be wished, by one that fixes

No bourn 'twixt his and mine; yet were it true

To say this boy were like me....Come, sir page,

Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!

Most dear'st! my collop! Can thy dam?—may't be?

[*Hermione and Polixenes draw within hearing*]

Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:

'Thou dost make possible things not so held,

Communicat'st with dreams—how can this be?— 140

With what's unreal thou coactive art,

And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent

'Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost

(And that beyond commission) and I find it,

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(And that to the infection of my brains,
And hard'ning of my brows.) [*he muses*]

Polixenes. What means Sicilia?

Hermione. He something seems unsettled.

Polixenes [*his hand on Leontes' shoulder*]. How, my lord!

Leontes [*rouses*]. What cheer? how is't with you, best
brother?

Hermione. You look

As if you held a brow of much distraction:

150 Are you moved, my lord?

Leontes. No, in good earnest.

How sometimes nature will betray its folly!

Its tenderness! and make itself a pastime

To harder bosoms! Looking on the lines

Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil

Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched,

In my green velvet coat; my dagger muzzled

Lest it should bite its master, and so prove

(As ornaments oft do) too dangerous...

How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,

160 This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,

Will you take eggs for money?

Mamillius. No, my lord, I'll fight.

Leontes. You will? why, happy man be's dole! My
brother,

Are you so fond of your young prince, as we

Do seem to be of ours?

Polixenes. If at home, sir,

He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter:

Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;

My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:

He makes a July's day short as December;

170 And with his varying childness cures in me

Thoughts that would thicken my blood.