

Cymbeline

3.4

Enter Pisanio, and Innogen in a riding-suit

INNOGEN

Thou told'st me when we came from horse the place
Was near at hand. Ne'er longed my mother so
To see me first as I have now. Pisanio, man,
Where is Posthumus? What is in thy mind
That makes thee stare thus? Wherefore breaks that
sigh 5

From th'inward of thee? One but painted thus
Would be interpreted a thing perplexed
Beyond self-explication. Put thyself
Into a haviour of less fear, ere wildness
Vanquish my staid senses. What's the matter? 10

Pisanio gives her a letter

Why tender'st thou that paper to me with
A look untender? If't be summer news,
Smile to't before; if winterly, thou need'st
But keep that count'nance still. My husband's hand?
That drug-damned Italy hath out-craftied him, 15
And he's at some hard point. Speak, man. Thy tongue
May take off some extremity which to read
Would be even mortal to me.

PISANIO

Please you read,
And you shall find me, wretched man, a thing
The most disdained of fortune. 20

INNOGEN *(reads)* 'Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the
strumpet in my bed, the testimonies whereof lies
bleeding in me. I speak not out of weak surmises but
from proof as strong as my grief and as certain as I
expect my revenge. That part thou, Pisanio, must act 25
for me, if thy faith be not tainted with the breach of
hers. Let thine own hands take away her life. I shall
give thee opportunity at Milford Haven. She hath my
letter for the purpose, where if thou fear to strike and
to make me certain it is done, thou art the pander to 30
her dishonour and equally to me disloyal.'

PISANIO (*aside*)

What shall I need to draw my sword? The paper
Hath cut her throat already. No, 'tis slander,
Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile, whose breath 35
Rides on the posting winds and doth belie
All corners of the world. Kings, queens, and states,
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters. (*To Innogen*) What cheer,
madam?

INNOGEN

False to his bed? What is it to be false? 40
To lie in watch there and to think on him?
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? If sleep charge nature,
To break it with a fearful dream of him
And cry myself awake? That's false to 's bed, is it?

PISANIO Alas, good lady. 45

INNOGEN

I false? Thy conscience witness, Giacomo,
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency.
Thou then lookedst like a villain; now, methinks,
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
Whose mother was her painting, hath betrayed him. 50
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion,
And for I am richer than to hang by th' walls
I must be ripped. To pieces with me! O,
Men's vows are women's traitors. All good seeming,
By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought 55
Put on for villainy; not born where't grows,
But worn a bait for ladies.

PISANIO Good madam, hear me.

INNOGEN

True honest men being heard like false Aeneas
Were in his time thought false, and Sinon's weeping
Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity 60
From most true wretchedness. So thou, Posthumus,
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men.
Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjured
From thy great fail. (*To Pisanio*) Come, fellow, be thou
honest,

Do thou thy master's bidding. When thou seest him, 65
A little witness my obedience. Look,
I draw the sword myself. Take it, and hit
The innocent mansion of my love, my heart.
Fear not, 'tis empty of all things but grief.
Thy master is not there, who was indeed 70
The riches of it. Do his bidding; strike.
Thou mayst be valiant in a better cause,
But now thou seem'st a coward.

PISANIO Hence, vile instrument,
Thou shalt not damn my hand!

INNOGEN Why, I must die,
And if I do not by thy hand thou art 75
No servant of thy master's. Against self-slaughter
There is a prohibition so divine
That cravens my weak hand. Come, here's my heart.
Something's afore't. Soft, soft, we'll no defence;
Obedient as the scabbard. What is here? 80

She takes letters from her bosom

The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,
All turned to heresy? Away, away,
Corrupters of my faith, you shall no more
Be stomachers to my heart. Thus may poor fools 85
Believe false teachers. Though those that are betrayed
Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor
Stands in worse case of woe. And thou, Posthumus,
That didst set up my disobedience 'gainst the King
My father, and make me put into contempt the suits
Of princely fellows, shalt hereafter find 90
It is no act of common passage but
A strain of rareness; and I grieve myself
To think, when thou shalt be disedged by her
That now thou tirest on, how thy memory
Will then be panged by me. (To Pisanio) Prithee,
dispatch. 95

The lamb entreats the butcher. Where's thy knife?
Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding
When I desire it too.

PISANIO O gracious lady,
Since I received command to do this business

I have not slept one wink.

INNOGEN Do't, and to bed, then. 100

PISANIO
I'll wake mine eyeballs out first.

INNOGEN Wherefore then
Didst undertake it? Why hast thou abused
So many miles with a pretence?±±this place,
Mine action, and thine own? Our horses' labour,
The time inviting thee? The perturbed court, 105
For my being absent, whereunto I never
Purpose return? Why hast thou gone so far
To be unbent when thou hast ta'en thy stand,
Th'elected deer before thee?

PISANIO But to win time
To lose so bad employment, in the which 110
I have considered of a course. Good lady,
Hear me with patience.

INNOGEN Talk thy tongue weary. Speak.
I have heard I am a strumpet, and mine ear,
Therein false struck, can take no greater wound,
Nor tent to bottom that. But speak.

PISANIO Then, madam,
115
I thought you would not back again.

INNOGEN Most like,
Bringing me here to kill me.

PISANIO Not so, neither.
But if I were as wise as honest, then
My purpose would prove well. It cannot be
But that my master is abused. Some villain, 120
Ay, and singular in his art, hath done you both
This curseAd injury.

INNOGEN Some Roman courtesan.

PISANIO No, on my life.
I'll give but notice you are dead, and send him 125
Some bloody sign of it, for 'tis commanded
I should do so. You shall be missed at court,
And that will well confirm it.

INNOGEN Why, good fellow,
What shall I do the while, where bide, how live,

Or in my life what comfort when I am
Dead to my husband? 130

PISANIO If you'll back to th' court±±

INNOGEN
No court, no father, nor no more ado
With that harsh, churlish, noble, simple nothing,
That Cloten, whose love suit hath been to me
As fearful as a siege.

PISANIO If not at court, 135
Then not in Britain must you bide.

INNOGEN Where then?
Hath Britain all the sun that shines? Day, night,
Are they not but in Britain? I'th' world's volume
Our Britain seems as of it but not in't,
In a great pool a swan's nest. Prithee, think 140
There's livers out of Britain.

PISANIO I am most glad
You think of other place. Th'ambassador,
Lucius the Roman, comes to Milford Haven
Tomorrow. Now if you could wear a mind
Dark as your fortune is, and but disguise 145
That which t'appear itself must not yet be
But by self-danger, you should tread a course
Pretty and full of view; yea, haply near
The residence of Posthumus; so nigh, at least,
That though his actions were not visible, yet 150
Report should render him hourly to your ear
As truly as he moves.

INNOGEN O, for such means,
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
I would adventure.

PISANIO Well then, here's the point:
You must forget to be a woman; change 155
Command into obedience, fear and niceness±±
The handmaids of all women, or more truly
Woman it pretty self±±into a waggish courage,
Ready in gibes, quick-answered, saucy and
As quarrelous as the weasel. Nay, you must 160
Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,
Exposing it±±but O, the harder heart!±±

Alack, no remedy±±to the greedy touch
Of common-kissing Titan, and forget
Your laboursome and dainty trims wherein 165
You made great Juno angry.

INNOGEN Nay, be brief.
I see into thy end, and am almost
A man already.

PISANIO First, make yourself but like one.
Forethinking this, I have already fit±±
'Tis in my cloak-bag±±doublet, hat, hose, all 170
That answer to them. Would you in their serving,
And with what imitation you can borrow
From youth of such a season, fore noble Lucius
Present yourself, desire his service, tell him
Wherein you're happy±±which will make him know 175
If that his head have ear in music±±doubtless
With joy he will embrace you, for he's honourable,
And, doubling that, most holy. Your means abroad±±
You have me, rich, and I will never fail
Beginning nor supplyment.

INNOGEN Thou art all the comfort 180
The gods will diet me with. Prithee away.
There's more to be considered, but we'll even
All that good time will give us. This attempt
I am soldier to, and will abide it with
A prince's courage. Away, I prithee. 185

PISANIO
Well, madam, we must take a short farewell
Lest, being missed, I be suspected of
Your carriage from the court. My noble mistress,
Here is a box. I had it from the Queen.
What's in't is precious. If you are sick at sea 190
Or stomach-qualmed at land, a dram of this
Will drive away distemper. To some shade,
And fit you to your manhood. May the gods
Direct you to the best.

INNOGEN Amen. I thank thee.
Exeunt severally