

The Winter's Tale

3.3

Enter Antigonus, carrying the babe, with a Mariner

ANTIGONUS

Thou art perfect then our ship hath touched upon
The deserts of Bohemia?

MARINER

Ay, my lord, and fear
We have landed in ill time. The skies look grimly
And threaten present blusters. In my conscience,
The heavens with that we have in hand are angry, 5
And frown upon's.

ANTIGONUS

Their sacred wills be done. Go get aboard.
Look to thy barque. I'll not be long before
I call upon thee.

MARINER

Make your best haste, and go not
Too far i'th' land. 'Tis like to be loud weather. 10
Besides, this place is famous for the creatures
Of prey that keep upon't.

ANTIGONUS

Go thou away.
I'll follow instantly.

MARINER

I am glad at heart
To be so rid o'th' business.

Exit

ANTIGONUS

Come, poor babe.
I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o'th' dead 15
May walk again. If such thing be, thy mother
Appeared to me last night, for ne'er was dream
So like a waking. To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another.
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow, 20
So filled and so becoming. In pure white robes
Like very sanctity she did approach
My cabin where I lay, thrice bowed before me,
And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts. The fury spent, anon 25
Did this break from her: `Good Antigonus,
Since fate, against thy better disposition,

Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
 Of my poor babe according to thine oath,
 Places remote enough are in Bohemia. 30
 There weep, and leave it crying; and for the babe
 Is counted lost for ever, 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 shrieks 35
 She melted into air. Affrighted much,
 I did in time collect myself, and thought
 This was so, and no slumber. Dreams are toys,
 Yet for this once, yea superstitiously,
 I will be squared by this. I do believe 40
 Hermione hath suffered death, and that
 Apollo would±±this being indeed the issue
 Of King Polixenes±±it should here be laid,
 Either for life or death, upon the earth
 Of its right father. Blossom, speed thee well! 45
He lays down the babe and a scroll
 There lie, and there thy character.
He lays down a box

There these,
 Which may, if fortune please, both breed thee, pretty,
 And still rest thine.
[Thunder]

The storm begins. Poor

wretch,
 That for thy mother's fault art thus exposed
 To loss and what may follow! Weep I cannot, 50
 But my heart bleeds, and most accursed am I
 To be by oath enjoined to this. Farewell.
 The day frowns more and more. Thou'rt like to have
 A lullaby too rough. I never saw
 The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour! 55
 Well may I get aboard. This is the chase.
 I am gone for ever!
Exit, pursued by a bear
Enter an Old Shepherd

OLD SHEPHERD I would there were no age between ten

and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out
the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting 60
wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing,
fighting±hark you now, would any but these boiled-
brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this
weather? They have scared away two of my best sheep,
which I fear the wolf will sooner find than the master. 65
If anywhere I have them, 'tis by the seaside, browsing
of ivy. Good luck, an't be thy will!

He sees the babe

What have we here? Mercy on's, a bairn! A very pretty
bairn. A boy or a child, I wonder? A pretty one, a very
pretty one. Sure some scape. Though I am not bookish, 70
yet I can read `waiting-gentlewoman' in the scape. This
has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some
behind-door-work. They were warmer that got this
than the poor thing is here. I'll take it up for pity; yet
I'll tarry till my son come. He hallooed but even now. 75
Whoa-ho-hoa!

Enter Clown

CLOWN Hilloa, loa!

OLD SHEPHERD What, art so near? If thou'lt see a thing
to talk on when thou art dead and rotten, come hither.
What ail'st thou, man? 80

CLOWN I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land!
But I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky.
Betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a
bodkin's point.

OLD SHEPHERD Why, boy, how is it? 85

CLOWN I would you did but see how it chafes, how it
rages, how it takes up the shore. But that's not to the
point. O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls!
Sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em; now the
ship boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon 90
swallowed with yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork
into a hogshead. And then for the land-service, to see
how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone, how he cried
to me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a
nobleman! But to make an end of the ship±±to see how 95
the sea flap-dragoned it! But first, how the poor souls

roared, and the sea mocked them, and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.

OLD SHEPHERD Name of mercy, when was this, boy? 100

CLOWN Now, now. I have not winked 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.

OLD SHEPHERD Would I had been by to have helped the old man! 105

CLOWN I would you had been by the ship side, to have helped her. There your charity would have lacked footing.

OLD SHEPHERD Heavy matters, heavy matters. But look thee here, boy. Now bless thyself. Thou metst with 110 things dying, I with things new-born. Here's a sight for thee. Look thee, a bearing-cloth for a squire's child.

He points to the box

Look thee here, take up, take up, boy. Open't. So, let's see. It was told me I should be rich by the fairies. This is some changeling. Open't. What's within, boy? 115

CLOWN (*opening the box*) You're a made old man. If the sins of your youth are forgiven you, you're well to live. Gold, all gold!

OLD SHEPHERD This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so. Up with't, keep it close. Home, home, the next way. 120 We are lucky, boy, and to be so still requires nothing but secrecy. Let my sheep go. Come, good boy, the next way home.

CLOWN Go you the next way with your findings. I'll go see if the bear be gone from the gentleman, and how much he hath eaten. They are never curst but when they are hungry. If there be any of him left, I'll bury it. 125

OLD SHEPHERD That's a good deed. If thou mayst discern by that which is left of him what he is, fetch me to th' 130 sight of him.

CLOWN Marry will I; and you shall help to put him i'th' ground.

OLD SHEPHERD 'Tis a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good deeds on't. 135

Exeunt