

# The Winter's Tale

## 5.1

*Enter Leontes, Cleomenes, Dion, and Paulina*

**CLEOMENES** (to Leontes)

Sir, you have done enough, and have performed  
A saint-like sorrow. No fault could you make  
Which you have not redeemed, indeed, paid down  
More penitence than done trespass. At the last  
Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil. 5  
With them, forgive yourself.

**LEONTES**

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 10  
Destroyed the sweet'st companion that e'er man  
Bred his hopes out of. True?

**PAULINA**

Too true, my lord.

If one by one you wedded all the world,  
Or from the all that are took something good  
To make a perfect woman, she you killed 15  
Would be unparalleled.

**LEONTES**

I think so. Killed?

She I killed? I did so. But thou strik'st me  
Sorely to say I did; it is as bitter  
Upon thy tongue as in my thought. Now, good now,  
Say so but seldom.

**CLEOMENES**

Not at all, good lady. 20

You might have spoke a thousand things that would  
Have done the time more benefit, and graced  
Your kindness better.

**PAULINA**

You are one of those

Would have him wed again.

**DION**

If you would not so

You pity not the state, nor the remembrance 25  
Of his most sovereign name, consider little  
What dangers, by his highness' fail of issue,  
May drop upon his kingdom and devour

Incertain lookers-on. What were more holy  
 Than to rejoice the former queen is well? 30  
 What holier, than for royalty's repair,  
 For present comfort and for future good,  
 To bless the bed of majesty again  
 With a sweet fellow to't?

**PAULINA** There is none worthy  
 Respecting her that's gone. Besides, the gods 35  
 Will have fulfilled their secret purposes.  
 For 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? Which that it shall 40  
 Is all as monstrous to our human reason  
 As my Antigonus to break his grave  
 And come again to me, who, on my life,  
 Did perish with the infant. 'Tis your counsel  
 My lord should to the heavens be contrary, 45  
 Oppose against their wills.  
 (*To Leontes*) Care not for issue.  
 The crown will find an heir. Great Alexander  
 Left his to th' worthiest, so his successor  
 Was like to be the best.

**LEONTES** Good Paulina,  
 Who hast the memory of Hermione, 50  
 I know, in honour±±O, that ever I  
 Had squared me to thy counsel! Then even now  
 I might have looked upon my queen's full eyes,  
 Have taken treasure from her lips.

**PAULINA** And left them  
 More rich for what they yielded.

**LEONTES** Thou speak'st truth. 55  
 No more such wives, therefore no wife. One worse,  
 And better used, would make her sainted spirit  
 Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,  
 Where we offenders mourn, appear soul-vexed,  
 And begin, `Why to me?'

**PAULINA** Had she such power 60  
 She had just cause.

**LEONTES** She had, and would incense me

To murder her I married.

**PAULINA** I should so.  
Were I the ghost that walked I'd bid you mark  
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in't  
You chose her. Then I'd shriek that even your ears 65  
Should rift to hear me, and the words that followed  
Should be, 'Remember mine'.

**LEONTES** Stars, stars,  
And all eyes else, dead coals! Fear thou no wife.  
I'll have no wife, Paulina.

**PAULINA** Will you swear  
Never to marry but by my free leave? 70

**LEONTES**  
Never, Paulina, so be blest my spirit.

**PAULINA**  
Then, good my lords, bear witness to his oath.

**CLEOMENES**  
You tempt him over-much.

**PAULINA** Unless another  
As like Hermione as is her picture  
Affront his eye±±

**CLEOMENES** Good madam, I have done. 75

**PAULINA**  
Yet if my lord will marry±±if you will, sir;  
No remedy but you will±±give me the office  
To choose your queen. She shall not be so young  
As was your former, but she shall be such  
As, walked your first queen's ghost, it should take joy 80  
To see her in your arms.

**LEONTES** My true Paulina,  
We shall not marry till thou bidd'st us.

**PAULINA** That  
Shall be when your first queen's again in breath.  
Never till then.

*Enter a Servant*

**SERVANT**  
One that gives out himself Prince Florizel, 85  
Son of Polixenes, with his princess±±she  
The fairest I have yet beheld±±desires access  
To your high presence.

**LEONTES** What with him? He comes not  
Like to his father's greatness. His approach,  
So out of circumstance and sudden, tells us 90  
'Tis not a visitation framed, but forced  
By need and accident. What train?

**SERVANT** But few,  
And those but mean.

**LEONTES** His princess, say you, with him?

**SERVANT**  
Ay, the most peerless piece of earth, I think,  
That e'er the sun shone bright on.

**PAULINA** O, Hermione,  
95

As every present time doth boast itself  
Above a better, gone, so must thy grave  
Give way to what's seen now!  
(*To the Servant*) Sir, you yourself  
Have said and writ so; but your writing now  
Is colder than that theme. She had not been 100  
Nor was not to be equalled±±thus your verse  
Flowed with her beauty once. 'Tis shrewdly ebb'd  
To say you have seen a better.

**SERVANT** Pardon, madam.  
The one I have almost forgot±±your pardon!  
The other, when she has obtained your eye, 105  
Will have your tongue too. This is a creature,  
Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal  
Of all professors else; make proselytes  
Of who she but bid follow.

**PAULINA** How? Not women!

**SERVANT**  
Women will love her that she is a woman 110  
More worth than any man; men, that she is  
The rarest of all women.

**LEONTES** Go, Cleomenes.  
Yourself, assisted with your honoured friends,  
Bring them to our embracement.

*Exit Cleomenes*

Still 'tis

strange

He thus should steal upon us.

**PAULINA** Had our prince, 115  
Jewel of children, seen this hour, he had paired  
Well with this lord. There was not full a month  
Between their births.

**LEONTES** Prithee no more, cease. Thou know'st  
He dies to me again when talked of. Sure,  
When I shall see this gentleman thy speeches 120  
Will bring me to consider that which may  
Unfurnish me of reason. They are come.

*Enter Florizel, Perdita, Cleomenes, and others*

Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince,  
For she did print your royal father off,  
Conceiving you. Were I but twenty-one, 125  
Your father's image is so hit in you,  
His very air, that I should call you brother,  
As I did him, and speak of something wildly  
By us performed before. Most dearly welcome,  
And your fair princess±±goddess! O, alas, 130  
I lost a couple that 'twixt heaven and earth  
Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as  
You, gracious couple, do; and then I lost±±  
All mine own folly±±the society,  
Amity too, of your brave father, whom, 135  
Though bearing misery, I desire my life  
Once more to look on him.

**FLORIZEL** By his command  
Have I here touched Sicilia, and from him  
Give you all greetings that a king at friend  
Can send his brother; and but infirmity, 140  
Which waits upon worn times, hath something seized  
His wished ability, he had himself  
The lands and waters 'twixt your throne and his  
Measured to look upon you, whom he loves±±  
He bade me say so±±more than all the sceptres, 145  
And those that bear them, living.

**LEONTES** O, my brother!  
Good gentleman, the wrongs I have done thee stir  
Afresh within me, and these thy offices,  
So rarely kind, are as interpreters

Of my behindhand slackness. Welcome hither, 150  
As is the spring to th'earth! And hath he too  
Exposed this paragon to th' fearful usage±±  
At least ungentle±±of the dreadful Neptune  
To greet a man not worth her pains, much less  
Th'adventure of her person?

**FLORIZEL** Good my lord, 155  
She came from Libya.

**LEONTES** Where the warlike Smalus,  
That noble honoured lord, is feared and loved?

**FLORIZEL**  
Most royal sir, from thence; from him whose daughter  
His tears proclaimed his, parting with her. Thence,  
A prosperous south wind friendly, we have crossed, 160  
To execute the charge my father gave me  
For visiting your highness. My best train  
I have from your Sicilian shores dismissed;  
Who for Bohemia bend, to signify  
Not only my success in Libya, sir, 165  
But my arrival, and my wife's, in safety  
Here where we are.

**LEONTES** The blesseÁd gods  
Purge all infection from our air whilst you  
Do climate here! You have a holy father,  
A graceful gentleman, against whose person, 170  
So sacred as it is, I have done sin,  
For which the heavens, taking angry note,  
Have left me issueless; and your father's blessed,  
As he from heaven merits it, with you,  
Worthy his goodness. What might I have been, 175  
Might I a son and daughter now have looked on,  
Such goodly things as you?

*Enter a Lord*

**LORD** Most noble sir,  
That which I shall report will bear no credit  
Were not the proof so nigh. Please you, great sir,  
Bohemia greets you from himself by me; 180  
Desires you to attach 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** Where's Bohemia? Speak.

**LORD**

Here in your city. I now came from him. 185

I speak amazedly, and it becomes

My marvel and my message. To your court

Whiles he was hast'ning±±in the chase, it seems,

Of this fair couple±±meets he on the way

The father of this seeming lady and 190

Her brother, having both their country quitted

With this young prince.

**FLORIZEL** Camillo has betrayed me,

Whose honour and whose honesty till now

Endured all weathers.

**LORD** Lay't so to his charge.

He's with the King your father.

**LEONTES** Who, Camillo? 195

**LORD**

Camillo, sir. I spake with him, who now

Has these poor men in question. 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 200

With divers deaths in death.

**PERDITA** O, my poor father!

The heaven sets spies upon us, will not have

Our contract celebrated.

**LEONTES** You are married?

**FLORIZEL**

We are not, sir, nor are we like to be.

The stars, I see, will kiss the valleys first. 205

The odds for high and low's alike.

**LEONTES** My lord,

Is this the daughter of a king?

**FLORIZEL** She is,

When once she is my wife.

**LEONTES**

That `once', I see, by your good father's speed

Will come on very slowly. I am sorry, 210

Most sorry, you have broken from his liking

Where you were tied in duty; and as sorry  
Your choice is not so rich in worth as beauty,  
That you might well enjoy her.

**FLORIZEL** *(to Perdita)* Dear, look up.

Though fortune, visible an enemy, 215  
Should chase us with my father, power no jot  
Hath she to change our loves.±±Beseech you, sir,  
Remember since you owed no more to time  
Than I do now. With thought of such affections,  
Step forth mine advocate. At your request 220  
My father will grant precious things as trifles.

**LEONTES**

Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,  
Which he counts but a trifle.

**PAULINA**

Sir, my liege,  
Your eye hath too much youth in't. Not a month  
Fore your queen died she was more worth such gazes 225  
Than what you look on now.

**LEONTES**

I thought of her  
Even in these looks I made.  
*(To Florizel)* But your petition  
Is yet unanswered. I will to your father.  
Your honour not o'erthrown by your desires,  
I am friend to them and you. Upon which errand 230  
I now go toward him. Therefore follow me,  
And mark what way I make. Come, good my lord.

*Exeunt*