

Pericles, Prince of Tyre

Sc.5

Enter Gower

GOWER

Here have you seen a mighty king
His child, iwis, to incest bring;
A better prince and benign lord
Prove awe-full both in deed and word.
Be quiet then, as men should be, 5
Till he hath passed necessity.
I'll show you those in trouble's reign,
Losing a mite, a mountain gain.
The good in conversation,
To whom I give my benison, 10
Is still at Tarsus where each man
Thinks all is writ he speken can,
And to remember what he does
His statue build to make him glorious.
But tidings to the contrary 15
Are brought your eyes. What need speak I?
Dumb show.

*Enter at one door Pericles talking with Cleon, all
the train with them. Enter at another door a
gentleman with a letter to Pericles. Pericles shows
the letter to Cleon. Pericles gives the messenger a
reward, and knights him. Exeunt with their trains
Pericles at one door and Cleon at another*

Good Helicane that stayed at home,
Not to eat honey like a drone
From others' labours, for that he strive
To killen bad, keep good alive, 20
And to fulfil his prince' desire
Sent word of all that haps in Tyre;
How Thaliart came full bent with sin
And hid intent to murther him,
And that in Tarsus was not best 25
Longer for him to make his rest.
He deeming so put forth to seas,

Where when men been there's seldom ease,
For now the wind begins to blow;
Thunder above and deeps below 30
Makes such unquiet that the ship
Should house him safe is wrecked and split,
And he, good prince, having all lost,
By waves from coast to coast is tossed.
All perishen of man, of pelf, 35
Ne aught escapend but himself,
Till fortune, tired with doing bad,
Threw him ashore to give him glad.

[Enter Pericles wet and half-naked]

And here he comes. What shall be next
Pardon old Gower; this 'longs the text. 40

Exit

[Thunder and lightning]

PERICLES

Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!
Wind, rain, and thunder, remember earthly man
Is but a substance that must yield to you,
And I, as fits my nature, do obey you.
Alas, the seas hath cast me on the rocks, 45
Washed me from shore to shore, and left my breath
Nothing to think on but ensuing death.
Let it suffice the greatness of your powers
To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes,
And, having thrown him from your wat'ry grave, 50
Here to have death in peace is all he'll crave.

[He sits.]

*Enter two poor Fishermen: one the Master, the
other his man*

MASTER *[calling]* What ho, Pilch!

SECOND FISHERMAN *[calling]* Ha, come and bring away the
nets.

MASTER *[calling]* What, Patchbreech, I say! 55

*[Enter a Third rough Fisherman with a hood upon
his head and a filthy leathern pelt upon his back,
unseemly clad, and homely to behold. He brings nets
to dry and repair]*

THIRD FISHERMAN What say you, master?

MASTER Look how thou stirrest now. Come away, or I'll
fetch th' with a wanion.

THIRD FISHERMAN Faith, master, I am thinking of the poor
men that were cast away before us even now. 60

MASTER Alas, poor souls, it grieved my heart to hear what
pitiful cries they made to us to help them when, well-
a-day, we could scarce help ourselves.

THIRD FISHERMAN Nay, master, said not I as much when
I saw the porpoise how he bounced and tumbled? They 65
say they're half fish, half flesh. A plague on them, they
ne'er come but I look to be washed. Master, I marvel
how the fishes live in the sea.

MASTER Why, as men do a-land±±the great ones eat up
the little ones. I can compare our rich misers to nothing 70
so fitly as to a whale: a plays and tumbles, driving the
poor fry before him, and at last devours them all at a
mouthful. Such whales have I heard on o'th' land, who
never leave gaping till they swallowed the whole parish:
church, steeple, bells, and all. 75

PERICLES (*aside*) A pretty moral.

THIRD FISHERMAN But, master, if I had been the sexton,
I would have been that day in the belfry.

SECOND FISHERMAN Why, man?

THIRD FISHERMAN Because he should have swallowed me, 80
too, and when I had been in his belly I would have
kept such a jangling of the bells that he should never
have left till he cast bells, steeple, church, and parish
up again. But if the good King Simonides were of my
mind±± 85

PERICLES (*aside*) Simonides?

THIRD FISHERMAN We would purge the land of these
drones that rob the bee of her honey.

PERICLES (*aside*)

How from the finny subject of the sea
These fishers tell th'infirmities of men, 90
And from their wat'ry empire recollect
All that may men approve or men detect!

[*Coming forward*] Peace be at your labour, honest
fishermen.

SECOND FISHERMAN Honest, good fellow? What's that? If

it be a day fits you, scratch't out of the calendar, and 95
nobody look after it.

PERICLES

May see the sea hath cast upon your coast±±

SECOND FISHERMAN What a drunken knave was the sea
to cast thee in our way!

PERICLES

A man, whom both the waters and the wind 100
In that vast tennis-court hath made the ball
For them to play upon, entreats you pity him.
He asks of you that never used to beg.

MASTER No, friend, cannot you beg? Here's them in our
country of Greece gets more with begging than we can 105
do with working.

SECOND FISHERMAN Canst thou catch any fishes, then?

PERICLES I never practised it.

SECOND FISHERMAN Nay, then thou wilt starve, sure; for
here's nothing to be got nowadays unless thou canst 110
fish for't.

PERICLES

What I have been, I have forgot to know,
But what I am, want teaches me to think on:
A man thronged up with cold; my veins are chill,
And have no more of life than may suffice 115
To give my tongue that heat to crave your help,
Which if you shall refuse, when I am dead,
For that I am a man, pray see me burieÁd.

[He falls down]

MASTER Die, quotha? Now, gods forbid't an I have a gown
here! *[To Pericles, lifting him up from the ground]* Come, 120
put it on, keep thee warm. Now, afore me, a handsome
fellow! Come, thou shalt go home, and we'll have flesh
for holidays, fish for fasting-days, and moreo'er
puddings and flapjacks, and thou shalt be welcome.

PERICLES I thank you, sir. 125

SECOND FISHERMAN Hark you, my friend, you said you
could not beg?

PERICLES I did but crave.

SECOND FISHERMAN But crave? Then I'll turn craver too,
an so I shall scape whipping. 130

PERICLES Why, are all your beggars whipped, then?

SECOND FISHERMAN O, not all, my friend, not all; for if all your beggars were whipped I would wish no better office than to be beadle.

MASTER Thine office, knave±± 135

SECOND FISHERMAN Is to draw up the other nets. I'll go.
Exit with Third Fisherman

PERICLES (*aside*)

How well this honest mirth becomes their labour!

MASTER [*seating himself by Pericles*] Hark you, sir, do you know where ye are?

PERICLES Not well. 140

MASTER Why, I'll tell you. This is called Pentapolis, and our king the good Simonides.

PERICLES

'The good Simonides' do you call him?

MASTER Ay, sir, and he deserves so to be called for his peaceable reign and good government. 145

PERICLES

He is a happy king, since from his subjects
He gains the name of good by his government.
How far is his court distant from this shore?

MASTER Marry, sir, some half a day's journey. And I'll tell you, he hath a fair daughter, and tomorrow is her¹⁵⁰ birthday, and there are princes and knights come from all parts of the world to joust and tourney for her love.

PERICLES

Were but my fortunes answerable
To my desires I could wish to make one there.

MASTER O, sir, things must be as they may, and what a¹⁵⁵ man cannot get himself, he may lawfully deal for with his wife's soul.

Enter the other two Fishermen drawing up a net

SECOND FISHERMAN Help, master, help! Here's a fish hangs in the net like a poor man's right in the law; 'twill hardly come out. 160

[Before help comes, up comes their prize]

Ha, bots on't, 'tis come at last, and 'tis turned to a rusty armour.

PERICLES

An armour, friends? I pray you let me see it.
(*Aside*) Thanks, fortune, yet that after all thy crosses
Thou giv'st me somewhat to repair my losses, 165
And though it was mine own, part of my heritage
Which my dead father did bequeath to me
With this strict charge ev'n as he left his life:
'Keep it, my Pericles; it hath been a shield
'Twixt me and death,' and pointed to this brace, 170
'For that it saved me, keep it. In like necessity,
The which the Gods forbend, the same may defend thee.'
It kept where I kept, I so dearly loved it,
Till the rough seas that spares not any man
Took it in rage, though calmed have giv'n't again. 175
I thank thee for't. My shipwreck now's no ill,
Since I have here my father gave in 's will.

MASTER What mean you, sir?

PERICLES

To beg of you, kind friends, this coat of worth,
For it was sometime target to a king. 180
I know it by this mark. He loved me dearly,
And for his sake I wish the having of it,
And that you'd guide me to your sov'reign's court,
Where with't I may appear a gentleman.
And if that ever my low fortune's better, 185
I'll pay your bounties, till then rest your debtor.

MASTER Why, wilt thou tourney for the lady?

PERICLES

I'll show the virtue I have learned in arms.

MASTER Why, d'ye take it, and the gods give thee good
on't! 190

SECOND FISHERMAN Ay, but hark you, my friend, 'twas
we that made up this garment through the rough
seams of the waters. There are certain condolences,
certain vails. I hope, sir, if you thrive, you'll remember
from whence you had this. 195

PERICLES Believe't, I will.

By your furtherance I'm clothed in steel,
And spite of all the rapture of the sea
This jewel holds his building on my arm.
Unto thy value I will mount myself 200

Upon a courser whose delightsome steps
Shall make the gazer joy to see him tread.
Only, my friends, I yet am unprovided
Of a pair of bases.

SECOND FISHERMAN We'll sure provide. Thou shalt have 205
my best gown to make thee a pair, and I'll bring thee
to the court myself.

PERICLES

Then honour be but equal to my will,
This day I'll rise, or else add ill to ill.
Exeunt with nets and armour