

The Winter's Tale

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Enter Polixenes and Camillo

POLIXENES I pray thee, good Camillo, be no more importunate. 'Tis a sickness denying thee anything, a death to grant this.

CAMILLO It is sixteen years since I saw my country. Though I have for the most part been aired abroad, I desire to lay my bones there. Besides, the penitent King, my master, hath sent for me, to whose feeling sorrows I might be some allay±±or I o'erween to think so±± which is another spur to my departure.

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POLIXENES As thou lov'st me, Camillo, wipe not out the rest of thy services by leaving me now. The need I have of thee thine own goodness hath made. Better not to have had thee than thus to want thee. Thou, having made me businesses which none without thee can sufficiently manage, must either stay to execute them thyself or take away with thee the very services thou hast done; which if I have not enough considered±±as too much I cannot±±to be more thankful to thee shall be my study, and my profit therein, the heaping friendships. Of that fatal country Sicilia, prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with the remembrance of that penitent±±as thou callest him±± and reconciled King my brother, whose loss of his most precious queen and children are even now to be afresh lamented. Say to me, when sawest thou the Prince Florizel, my son? Kings are no less unhappy, their issue not being gracious, than they are in losing them when they have approved their virtues.

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CAMILLO Sir, it is three days since I saw the Prince. What his happier affairs may be are to me unknown; but I have missingly noted he is of late much retired from court, and is less frequent to his princely exercises than formerly he hath appeared.

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POLIXENES I have considered so much, Camillo, and with some care, so far that I have eyes under my service

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which look upon his removedness, from whom I have this intelligence: that he is seldom from the house of a most homely shepherd, a man, they say, that from very nothing, and beyond the imagination of his neighbours, is grown into an unspeakable estate. 40

CAMILLO I have heard, sir, of such a man, who hath a daughter of most rare note. The report of her is extended more than can be thought to begin from such a cottage.

POLIXENES That's likewise part of my intelligence; but, I fear, the angle that plucks our son thither. Thou shalt accompany us to the place, where we will, not appearing what we are, have some question with the shepherd; from whose simplicity I think it not uneasy to get the cause of my son's resort thither. Prithee, be my present partner in this business, and lay aside the thoughts of Sicilia. 45 50

CAMILLO I willingly obey your command.

POLIXENES My best Camillo! We must disguise ourselves.
Exeunt