

The Winter's Tale

4.3

Enter Autolycus singing

AUTOLYCUS

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh, the doxy over the dale,
Why then comes in the sweet o'the year,
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.
The white sheet bleaching on the hedge, 5
With heigh, the sweet birds, O how they sing!
Doth set my pugging tooth on edge,
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.
The lark, that tirra-lirra chants,
With heigh, with heigh, the thrush and the jay, 10
Are summer songs for me and my aunts
While we lie tumbling in the hay.
I have served Prince Florizel, and in my time wore
three-pile, but now I am out of service.
But shall I go mourn for that, my dear? 15
The pale moon shines by night,
And when I wander here and there
I then do most go right.
If tinkers may have leave to live,
And bear the sow-skin budget, 20
Then my account I well may give,
And in the stocks avouch it.
My traffic is sheets. When the kite builds, look to lesser
linen. My father named me Autolycus, who being, as
I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper- 25
up of unconsidered trifles. With die and drab I purchased
this caparison, and my revenue is the silly cheat.
Gallows and knock are too powerful on the highway.
Beating and hanging are terrors to me. For the life to
come, I sleep out the thought of it. A prize, a prize! 30

Enter Clown

CLOWN Let me see. Every 'leven wether tods, every tod
yields pound and odd shilling. Fifteen hundred shorn,
what comes the wool to?

AUTOLYCUS (*aside*) If the springe hold, the cock's mine.

CLOWN I cannot do't without counters. Let me see, what 35
am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound
of sugar, five pound of currants, rice±±what will this
sister of mine do with rice? But my father hath made
her mistress of the feast, and she lays it on. She hath
made me four-and-twenty nosegays for the shearers±± 40
three-man-song-men, all, and very good ones±±but
they are most of them means and basses, but one
Puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to
hornpipes. I must have saffron to colour the warden
pies; mace; dates, none±±that's out of my note; 45
nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger±±but that I
may beg; four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins
o'th' sun.

AUTOLYCUS (*grovelling on the ground*) O, that ever I was
born! 50

CLOWN I'th' name of me!

AUTOLYCUS O help me, help me! Pluck but off these rags,
and then death, death!

CLOWN Alack, poor soul, thou hast need of more rags to
lay on thee rather than have these off. 55

AUTOLYCUS O sir, the loathsomeness of them offend me
more than the stripes I have received, which are mighty
ones and millions.

CLOWN Alas, poor man, a million of beating may come
to a great matter. 60

AUTOLYCUS I am robbed, sir, and beaten; my money and
apparel ta'en from me, and these detestable things put
upon me.

CLOWN What, by a horseman, or a footman?

AUTOLYCUS A footman, sweet sir, a footman. 65

CLOWN Indeed, he should be a footman, by the garments
he has left with thee. If this be a horseman's coat it
hath seen very hot service. Lend me thy hand, I'll help
thee. Come, lend me thy hand.

He helps Autolycus up

AUTOLYCUS O, good sir, tenderly. O! 70

CLOWN Alas, poor soul!

AUTOLYCUS O, good sir, softly, good sir! I fear, sir, my

shoulder-blade is out.

CLOWN How now? Canst stand?

AUTOLYCUS Softly, dear sir. Good sir, softly. 75

[He picks the Clown's pocket]

You ha' done me a charitable office.

CLOWN *(reaching for his purse)* Dost lack any money? I have a little money for thee.

AUTOLYCUS No, good sweet sir, no, I beseech you, sir. I have a kinsman not past three-quarters of a mile hence, unto whom I was going. I shall there have money, or anything I want. Offer me no money, I pray you. That kills my heart. 80

CLOWN What manner of fellow was he that robbed you?

AUTOLYCUS A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with troll-madams. I knew him once a servant of the Prince. I cannot tell, good sir, for which of his virtues it was, but he was certainly whipped out of the court. 85

CLOWN His vices, you would say. There's no virtue whipped out of the court. They cherish it to make it stay there; and yet it will no more but abide. 90

AUTOLYCUS Vices, I would say, sir. I know this man well. He hath been since an ape-bearer, then a process-server±±a bailiff±±then he compassed a motion of the Prodigal Son, and married a tinker's wife within a mile where my land and living lies, and having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue. 95
Some call him Autolycus.

CLOWN Out upon him! Prig, for my life, prig! He haunts wakes, fairs, and bear-baitings. 100

AUTOLYCUS Very true, sir. He, sir, he. That's the rogue that put me into this apparel.

CLOWN Not a more cowardly rogue in all Bohemia. If you had but looked big and spit at him, he'd have run. 105

AUTOLYCUS I must confess to you, sir, I am no fighter. I am false of heart that way, and that he knew, I warrant him.

CLOWN How do you now?

AUTOLYCUS Sweet sir, much better than I was. I can stand, and walk. I will even take my leave of you, and pace 110

softly towards my kinsman's.

CLOWN Shall I bring thee on the way?

AUTOLYCUS No, good-faced sir, no, sweet sir.

CLOWN Then fare thee well. I must go buy spices for our 115
sheep-shearing.

AUTOLYCUS Prosper you, sweet sir.

Exit the Clown

Your purse is not hot enough to purchase your spice.
I'll be with you at your sheep-shearing, too. If I make
not this cheat bring out another, and the shearers 120
prove sheep, let me be unrolled and my name put in
the book of virtue.

(Sings)

Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a.
A merry heart goes all the day, 125
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Exit