

Cymbeline

1.5

Enter Queen, Ladies, and Cornelius, a doctor

QUEEN

Whiles yet the dew's on ground, gather those flowers.
Make haste. Who has the note of them?

A LADY

I, madam.

QUEEN

Dispatch.

Exeunt Ladies

Now, Master Doctor, have you brought those drugs?

CORNELIUS

Pleaseth your highness, ay. Here they are, madam. 5

He gives her a box

But I beseech your grace, without offence±±
My conscience bids me ask±±wherefore you have
Commanded of me these most poisonous compounds,
Which are the movers of a languishing death,
But though slow, deadly.

QUEEN

I wonder, doctor, 10

Thou ask'st me such a question. Have I not been
Thy pupil long? Hast thou not learned me how
To make perfumes, distil, preserve±±yea, so
That our great King himself doth woo me oft
For my confections? Having thus far proceeded, 15
Unless thou think'st me devilish, is't not meet
That I did amplify my judgement in
Other conclusions? I will try the forces
Of these thy compounds on such creatures as
We count not worth the hanging, but none human, 20
To try the vigour of them, and apply
Allayments to their act, and by them gather
Their several virtues and effects.

CORNELIUS

Your highness

Shall from this practice but make hard your heart.
Besides, the seeing these effects will be 25
Both noisome and infectious.

QUEEN

O, content thee.

Enter Pisanio

(*Aside*) Here comes a flattering rascal; upon him
Will I first work. He's factor for his master,
And enemy to my son. (*Aloud*) How now, Pisanio?±±
Doctor, your service for this time is ended. 30
Take your own way.

CORNELIUS (*aside*) I do suspect you, madam.
But you shall do no harm.

QUEEN (*to Pisanio*) Hark thee, a word.

CORNELIUS (*aside*)
I do not like her. She doth think she has
Strange ling'ring poisons. I do know her spirit,
And will not trust one of her malice with 35
A drug of such damned nature. Those she has
Will stupefy and dull the sense a while,
Which first, perchance, she'll prove on cats and dogs,
Then afterward up higher; but there is
No danger in what show of death it makes 40
More than the locking up the spirits a time,
To be more fresh, reviving. She is fooled
With a most false effect, and I the truer
So to be false with her.

QUEEN No further service, doctor,
Until I send for thee.

CORNELIUS I humbly take my leave. 45

Exit

QUEEN (*to Pisanio*)

Weeps she still, sayst thou? Dost thou think in time
She will not quench, and let instructions enter
Where folly now possesses? Do thou work.
When thou shalt bring me word she loves my son
I'll tell thee on the instant thou art then 50
As great as is thy master±±greater, for
His fortunes all lie speechless, and his name
Is at last gasp. Return he cannot, nor
Continue where he is. To shift his being
Is to exchange one misery with another, 55
And every day that comes comes to decay
A day's work in him. What shalt thou expect
To be depender on a thing that leans,
Who cannot be new built nor has no friends

So much as but to prop him?

[She drops her box. He takes it up]

Thou tak'st up

60

Thou know'st not what; but take it for thy labour.

It is a thing I made which hath the King

Five times redeemed from death. I do not know

What is more cordial. Nay, I prithee take it.

It is an earnest of a farther good

65

That I mean to thee. Tell thy mistress how

The case stands with her; do't as from thyself.

Think what a chance thou changest on, but think

Thou hast thy mistress still; to boot, my son,

Who shall take notice of thee. I'll move the King

70

To any shape of thy preferment, such

As thou'lt desire; and then myself, I chiefly,

That set thee on to this desert, am bound

To load thy merit richly. Call my women.

Think on my words.

Exit Pisanio

A sly and constant knave,

75

Not to be shaken; the agent for his master,

And the remembrancer of her to hold

The hand-fast to her lord. I have given him that

Which, if he take, shall quite unpeople her

Of liegers for her sweet, and which she after,

80

Except she bend her humour, shall be assured

To taste of too.

Enter Pisanio and Ladies

So, so; well done, well done.

The violets, cowslips, and the primroses

Bear to my closet. Fare thee well, Pisanio.

Think on my words, Pisanio.

PISANIO

And shall do.

85

Exeunt Queen and Ladies

But when to my good lord I prove untrue,

I'll choke myself±±there's all I'll do for you.

Exit