

The Winter's Tale

2.2

Enter Paulina, a Gentleman, and attendants

PAULINA

The keeper of the prison, call to him.
Let him have knowledge who I am.

Exit Gentleman

Good lady,

No court in Europe is too good for thee.
What dost thou then in prison?

Enter Jailer and Gentleman

Now,

good sir,

You know me, do you not?

JAILER

For a worthy lady,

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And one who much I honour.

PAULINA

Pray you then,

Conduct me to the Queen.

JAILER

I may not, madam. To the contrary
I have express commandment.

PAULINA

Here's ado,

10

To lock up honesty and honour from

Th'access of gentle visitors. Is't lawful, pray you,

To see her women? Any of them? Emilia?

JAILER

So please you, madam,

To put apart these your attendants, I

15

Shall bring Emilia forth.

PAULINA

I pray now call her.±±

Withdraw yourselves.

Exeunt Gentleman and attendants

JAILER

And, madam,

I must be present at your conference.

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PAULINA

Well, be't so, prithee.

Exit Jailer

Here's such ado, to make no stain a stain
As passes colouring.

Enter Jailer and Emilia

Dear gentlewoman,

How fares our gracious lady?

EMILIA

As well as one so great and so forlorn 25
May hold together. On her frights and griefs,
Which never tender lady hath borne greater,
She is, something before her time, delivered.

PAULINA

A boy?

EMILIA A daughter, and a goodly babe, 30
Lusty, and like to live. The Queen receives
Much comfort in't; says, 'My poor prisoner,
I am innocent as you.'

PAULINA

I dare be sworn.

These dangerous, unsafe lunes i'th' King, beshrew
them!

He must be told on't, and he shall. The office 35
Becomes a woman best. I'll take't upon me.
If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-looking anger be
The trumpet any more. Pray you, Emilia,
Commend my best obedience to the Queen.
If she dares trust me with her little babe 40
I'll show't the King, and undertake to be
Her advocate to th' loud'st. We do not know
How he may soften at the sight o'th' child.
The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.

EMILIA

Most worthy madam, 45

Your honour and your goodness is so evident
That your free undertaking cannot miss
A thriving issue. There is no lady living
So meet for this great errand. Please your ladyship
To visit the next room, I'll presently 50
Acquaint the Queen of your most noble offer,
Who but today hammered of this design
But durst not tempt a minister of honour
Lest she should be denied.

PAULINA

Tell her, Emilia,

I'll use that tongue I have. If wit flow from't
As boldness from my bosom, let't not be doubted
I shall do good.

55

EMILIA Now be you blest for it!
I'll to the Queen. Please you come something nearer.

JAILER
Madam, if't please the Queen to send the babe
I know not what I shall incur to pass it, 60
Having no warrant.

PAULINA You need not fear it, sir.
This child was prisoner to the womb, and is
By law and process of great nature thence
Freed and enfranchised, not a party to
The anger of the King, nor guilty of±± 65
If any be±±the trespass of the Queen.

JAILER I do believe it.

PAULINA
Do not you fear. Upon mine honour,
I will stand twixt you and danger.

Exeunt