

The Winter's Tale - Act 2 Scene 1

LEONTES Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him. *To Hermione*
Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you
Have too much blood in him.

HERMIONE What is this? Sport?

LEONTES Bear the boy hence. He shall not come about her. *To a Lord or Lady*
Away with him, and let her sport herself
With that she's big with,— for 'tis Polixenes *To Hermione*
Has made thee swell thus. [*The Lord or Lady exits with Mamillius*]

HERMIONE But I'd say he had not;
And I'll be sworn you would believe my saying,
Howe'er you lean to th'nayward.

LEONTES You, my lords,
Look on her, mark her well. Be but about
To say 'she is a goodly lady', and
The justice of your hearts will thereto add
'Tis pity she's not honest, honourable'.
Praise her but for this her without-door form,
Which on my faith deserves high speech, and straight
The shrug, the hum or ha, these petty brands
That calumny doth use — O, I am out —
That mercy does, for calumny will sear
Virtue itself: these shrugs, these hums and ha's,
When you have said 'she's goodly', come between
Ere you can say 'she's honest'. But be't known,
From him that has most cause to grieve it should be,
She's an adultress.

HERMIONE Should a villain say so —
The most replenished villain in the world —
He were as much more villain. You, my lord,
Do but mistake.

LEONTES You have mistook, my lady,
Polixenes for Leontes. I have said
She's an adultress. I have said with whom.
More, she's a traitor and Camillo is
A federary with her, and one that knows
What she should shame to know herself
But with her most vile principal, that she's

A bed-swerver, even as bad as those
That vulgars give bold'st titles; ay, and privy
To this their late escape.

HERMIONE

No, by my life,
Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you,
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
You thus have published me.

LEONTES

Away with her, to prison!
He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty
But that he speaks.

HERMIONE

There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable. Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping — as our sex
Commonly are — the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities: but I have
That honourable grief lodged here which burns
Worse than tears drown. Beseech you all, my lords,
With thoughts so qualified as your charities
Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so
The king's will be performed.

LEONTES

Shall I be heard?

HERMIONE

Who is't that goes with me? Beseech your highness
My women may be with me, for you see
My plight requires it. Do not weep, good fools.
There is no cause. When you shall know your mistress
Has deserved prison, then abound in tears
As I come out; this action I now go on
Is for my better grace.— Adieu, my lord. *To Leontes*
I never wished to see you sorry, now
I trust I shall.— My women, come, you have leave.

LEONTES

Go, do our bidding. Hence! [*Exit Hermione, guarded, with Ladies*]