

# Cymbeline

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## SCENE IV. Country near Milford-Haven.

*Enter PISANIO and IMOGEN*

### IMOGEN

Thou told'st me, when we came from horse, the place  
Was near at hand: ne'er long'd my mother so  
To see me first, as I have now. Pisanio! man!  
Where is Posthumus? What is in thy mind,  
That makes thee stare thus? Wherefore breaks that sigh  
From the inward of thee? One, but painted thus,  
Would be interpreted a thing perplex'd  
Beyond self-explication: put thyself  
Into a havior of less fear, ere wildness  
Vanquish my staid senses. What's the matter?  
Why tender'st thou that paper to me, with  
A look untender? If't be summer news,  
Smile to't before; if winterly, thou need'st  
But keep that countenance still. My husband's hand!  
That drug-damn'd Italy hath out-craftied him,  
And he's at some hard point. Speak, man: thy tongue  
May take off some extremity, which to read  
Would be even mortal to me.

### PISANIO

Please you, read;  
And you shall find me, wretched man, a thing  
The most disdain'd of fortune.

### IMOGEN

[Reads] 'Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the  
strumpet in my bed; the testimonies whereof lie  
bleeding in me. I speak not out of weak surmises,  
but from proof as strong as my grief and as certain  
as I expect my revenge. That part thou, Pisanio,  
must act for me, if thy faith be not tainted with  
the breach of hers. Let thine own hands take away  
her life: I shall give thee opportunity at  
Milford-Haven. She hath my letter for the purpose  
where, if thou fear to strike and to make me certain  
it is done, thou art the pandar to her dishonour and  
equally to me disloyal.'

### PISANIO

What shall I need to draw my sword? the paper  
Hath cut her throat already. No, 'tis slander,  
Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue  
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile, whose breath  
Rides on the posting winds and doth belie  
All corners of the world: kings, queens and states,  
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave  
This viperous slander enters. What cheer, madam?

## **IMOGEN**

False to his bed! What is it to be false?  
To lie in watch there and to think on him?  
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? if sleep  
charge nature,  
To break it with a fearful dream of him  
And cry myself awake? that's false to's bed, is it?

## **PISANIO**

Alas, good lady!

## **IMOGEN**

I false! Thy conscience witness: Iachimo,  
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency;  
Thou then look'dst like a villain; now methinks  
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy  
Whose mother was her painting, hath betray'd him:  
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;  
And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,  
I must be ripp'd:--to pieces with me!--O,  
Men's vows are women's traitors! All good seeming,  
By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought  
Put on for villany; not born where't grows,  
But worn a bait for ladies.

## **PISANIO**

Good madam, hear me.

## **IMOGEN**

True honest men being heard, like false Aeneas,  
Were in his time thought false, and Sinon's weeping  
Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity  
From most true wretchedness: so thou, Posthumus,  
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men;  
Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjured  
From thy great fall. Come, fellow, be thou honest:  
Do thou thy master's bidding: when thou see'st him,  
A little witness my obedience: look!  
I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit

The innocent mansion of my love, my heart;  
Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief;  
Thy master is not there, who was indeed  
The riches of it: do his bidding; strike  
Thou mayst be valiant in a better cause;  
But now thou seem'st a coward.

## **PISANIO**

Hence, vile instrument!  
Thou shalt not damn my hand.

## **IMOGEN**

Why, I must die;  
And if I do not by thy hand, thou art  
No servant of thy master's. Against self-slaughter  
There is a prohibition so divine  
That cravens my weak hand. Come, here's my heart.  
Something's afore't. Soft, soft! we'll no defence;  
Obedient as the scabbard. What is here?  
The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,  
All turn'd to heresy? Away, away,  
Corrupters of my faith! you shall no more  
Be stomachers to my heart. Thus may poor fools  
Believe false teachers: though those that  
are betray'd  
Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor  
Stands in worse case of woe.  
And thou, Posthumus, thou that didst set up  
My disobedience 'gainst the king my father  
And make me put into contempt the suits  
Of princely fellows, shalt hereafter find  
It is no act of common passage, but  
A strain of rareness: and I grieve myself  
To think, when thou shalt be disedged by her  
That now thou tirest on, how thy memory  
Will then be pang'd by me. Prithee, dispatch:  
The lamb entreats the butcher: where's thy knife?  
Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding,  
When I desire it too.

## **PISANIO**

O gracious lady,  
Since I received command to do this business  
I have not slept one wink.

## **IMOGEN**

Do't, and to bed then.

## **PISANIO**

I'll wake mine eye-balls blind first.

**IMOGEN**

Wherefore then  
Didst undertake it? Why hast thou abused  
So many miles with a pretence? this place?  
Mine action and thine own? our horses' labour?  
The time inviting thee? the perturb'd court,  
For my being absent? whereunto I never  
Purpose return. Why hast thou gone so far,  
To be unbent when thou hast ta'en thy stand,  
The elected deer before thee?

**PISANIO**

But to win time  
To lose so bad employment; in the which  
I have consider'd of a course. Good lady,  
Hear me with patience.

**IMOGEN**

Talk thy tongue weary; speak  
I have heard I am a strumpet; and mine ear  
Therein false struck, can take no greater wound,  
Nor tent to bottom that. But speak.

**PISANIO**

Then, madam,  
I thought you would not back again.

**IMOGEN**

Most like;  
Bringing me here to kill me.

**PISANIO**

Not so, neither:  
But if I were as wise as honest, then  
My purpose would prove well. It cannot be  
But that my master is abused:  
Some villain, ay, and singular in his art.  
Hath done you both this cursed injury.

**IMOGEN**

Some Roman courtezan.

**PISANIO**

No, on my life.  
I'll give but notice you are dead and send him  
Some bloody sign of it; for 'tis commanded  
I should do so: you shall be miss'd at court,  
And that will well confirm it.

## **IMOGEN**

Why good fellow,  
What shall I do the where? where bide? how live?  
Or in my life what comfort, when I am  
Dead to my husband?

## **PISANIO**

If you'll back to the court--

## **IMOGEN**

No court, no father; nor no more ado  
With that harsh, noble, simple nothing,  
That Cloten, whose love-suit hath been to me  
As fearful as a siege.

## **PISANIO**

If not at court,  
Then not in Britain must you bide.

## **IMOGEN**

Where then  
Hath Britain all the sun that shines? Day, night,  
Are they not but in Britain? I' the world's volume  
Our Britain seems as of it, but not in 't;  
In a great pool a swan's nest: prithee, think  
There's livers out of Britain.

## **PISANIO**

I am most glad  
You think of other place. The ambassador,  
Lucius the Roman, comes to Milford-Haven  
To-morrow: now, if you could wear a mind  
Dark as your fortune is, and but disguise  
That which, to appear itself, must not yet be  
But by self-danger, you should tread a course  
Pretty and full of view; yea, haply, near  
The residence of Posthumus; so nigh at least  
That though his actions were not visible, yet  
Report should render him hourly to your ear  
As truly as he moves.

**IMOGEN**

O, for such means!  
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,  
I would adventure.

**PISANIO**

Well, then, here's the point:  
You must forget to be a woman; change  
Command into obedience: fear and niceness--  
The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,  
Woman its pretty self--into a waggish courage:  
Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy and  
As quarrelous as the weasel; nay, you must  
Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,  
Exposing it--but, O, the harder heart!  
Alack, no remedy!--to the greedy touch  
Of common-kissing Titan, and forget  
Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein  
You made great Juno angry.

**IMOGEN**

Nay, be brief  
I see into thy end, and am almost  
A man already.

**PISANIO**

First, make yourself but like one.  
Fore-thinking this, I have already fit--  
'Tis in my cloak-bag--doublet, hat, hose, all  
That answer to them: would you in their serving,  
And with what imitation you can borrow  
From youth of such a season, 'fore noble Lucius  
Present yourself, desire his service, tell him  
wherein you're happy,--which you'll make him know,  
If that his head have ear in music,--doubtless  
With joy he will embrace you, for he's honourable  
And doubling that, most holy. Your means abroad,  
You have me, rich; and I will never fail  
Beginning nor supplyment.

**IMOGEN**

Thou art all the comfort  
The gods will diet me with. Prithee, away:  
There's more to be consider'd; but we'll even  
All that good time will give us: this attempt  
I am soldier to, and will abide it with  
A prince's courage. Away, I prithee.

## PISANIO

Well, madam, we must take a short farewell,  
Lest, being miss'd, I be suspected of  
Your carriage from the court. My noble mistress,  
Here is a box; I had it from the queen:  
What's in't is precious; if you are sick at sea,  
Or stomach-qualm'd at land, a dram of this  
Will drive away distemper. To some shade,  
And fit you to your manhood. May the gods  
Direct you to the best!

## IMOGEN

Amen: I thank thee.

*Exeunt, severally*

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