

# Cymbeline

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [Cymbeline](#) | Act 5, Scene 3  
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)

## SCENE III. Another part of the field.

*Enter POSTHUMUS LEONATUS and a British Lord*

**Lord**

Camest thou from where they made the stand?

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

I did.  
Though you, it seems, come from the fliers.

**Lord**

I did.

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

No blame be to you, sir; for all was lost,  
But that the heavens fought: the king himself  
Of his wings destitute, the army broken,  
And but the backs of Britons seen, all flying  
Through a straight lane; the enemy full-hearted,  
Lolling the tongue with slaughtering, having work  
More plentiful than tools to do't, struck down  
Some mortally, some slightly touch'd, some falling  
Merely through fear; that the straight pass was damm'd  
With dead men hurt behind, and cowards living  
To die with lengthen'd shame.

**Lord**

Where was this lane?

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Close by the battle, ditch'd, and wall'd with turf;  
Which gave advantage to an ancient soldier,  
An honest one, I warrant; who deserved  
So long a breeding as his white beard came to,  
In doing this for's country: athwart the lane,  
He, with two striplings-lads more like to run  
The country base than to commit such slaughter  
With faces fit for masks, or rather fairer  
Than those for preservation cased, or shame--  
Made good the passage; cried to those that fled,

'Our Britain's harts die flying, not our men:  
To darkness fleet souls that fly backwards. Stand;  
Or we are Romans and will give you that  
Like beasts which you shun beastly, and may save,  
But to look back in frown: stand, stand.'  
These three,  
Three thousand confident, in act as many--  
For three performers are the file when all  
The rest do nothing--with this word 'Stand, stand,'  
Accommodated by the place, more charming  
With their own nobleness, which could have turn'd  
A distaff to a lance, gilded pale looks,  
Part shame, part spirit renew'd; that some,  
turn'd coward  
But by example--O, a sin in war,  
Damn'd in the first beginners!--gan to look  
The way that they did, and to grin like lions  
Upon the pikes o' the hunters. Then began  
A stop i' the chaser, a retire, anon  
A rout, confusion thick; forthwith they fly  
Chickens, the way which they stoop'd eagles; slaves,  
The strides they victors made: and now our cowards,  
Like fragments in hard voyages, became  
The life o' the need: having found the backdoor open  
Of the unguarded hearts, heavens, how they wound!  
Some slain before; some dying; some their friends  
O'er borne i' the former wave: ten, chased by one,  
Are now each one the slaughter-man of twenty:  
Those that would die or ere resist are grown  
The mortal bugs o' the field.

**Lord**

This was strange chance  
A narrow lane, an old man, and two boys.

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Nay, do not wonder at it: you are made  
Rather to wonder at the things you hear  
Than to work any. Will you rhyme upon't,  
And vent it for a mockery? Here is one:  
'Two boys, an old man twice a boy, a lane,  
Preserved the Britons, was the Romans' bane.'

**Lord**

Nay, be not angry, sir.

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

'Lack, to what end?  
Who dares not stand his foe, I'll be his friend;

For if he'll do as he is made to do,  
I know he'll quickly fly my friendship too.  
You have put me into rhyme.

## **Lord**

Farewell; you're angry.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Still going?

*Exit Lord*

This is a lord! O noble misery,  
To be i' the field, and ask 'what news?' of me!  
To-day how many would have given their honours  
To have saved their carcasses! took heel to do't,  
And yet died too! I, in mine own woe charm'd,  
Could not find death where I did hear him groan,  
Nor feel him where he struck: being an ugly monster,  
'Tis strange he hides him in fresh cups, soft beds,  
Sweet words; or hath more ministers than we  
That draw his knives i' the war. Well, I will find him  
For being now a favourer to the Briton,  
No more a Briton, I have resumed again  
The part I came in: fight I will no more,  
But yield me to the veriest hind that shall  
Once touch my shoulder. Great the slaughter is  
Here made by the Roman; great the answer be  
Britons must take. For me, my ransom's death;  
On either side I come to spend my breath;  
Which neither here I'll keep nor bear again,  
But end it by some means for Imogen.

*Enter two British Captains and Soldiers*

## **First Captain**

Great Jupiter be praised! Lucius is taken.  
'Tis thought the old man and his sons were angels.

## **Second Captain**

There was a fourth man, in a silly habit,  
That gave the affront with them.

## **First Captain**

So 'tis reported:  
But none of 'em can be found. Stand! who's there?

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

A Roman,  
Who had not now been drooping here, if seconds  
Had answer'd him.

## Second Captain

Lay hands on him; a dog!  
A leg of Rome shall not return to tell  
What crows have peck'd them here. He brags  
his service  
As if he were of note: bring him to the king.

*Enter CYMBELINE, BELARIUS, GUIDERIUS, ARVIRAGUS, PISANIO, Soldiers, Attendants, and Roman Captives. The Captains present POSTHUMUS LEONATUS to CYMBELINE, who delivers him over to a Gaoler: then exeunt omnes*

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [Cymbeline](#) | Act 5, Scene 3  
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)