

# Cymbeline

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## SCENE IV. A British prison.

*Enter POSTHUMUS LEONATUS and two Gaolers*

### First Gaoler

You shall not now be stol'n, you have locks upon you;  
So graze as you find pasture.

### Second Gaoler

Ay, or a stomach.

*Exeunt Gaolers*

## POSTHUMUS LEONATUS

Most welcome, bondage! for thou art away,  
think, to liberty: yet am I better  
Than one that's sick o' the gout; since he had rather  
Groan so in perpetuity than be cured  
By the sure physician, death, who is the key  
To unbar these locks. My conscience, thou art fetter'd  
More than my shanks and wrists: you good gods, give me  
The penitent instrument to pick that bolt,  
Then, free for ever! Is't enough I am sorry?  
So children temporal fathers do appease;  
Gods are more full of mercy. Must I repent?  
I cannot do it better than in gyves,  
Desired more than constrain'd: to satisfy,  
If of my freedom 'tis the main part, take  
No stricter render of me than my all.  
I know you are more clement than vile men,  
Who of their broken debtors take a third,  
A sixth, a tenth, letting them thrive again  
On their abatement: that's not my desire:  
For Imogen's dear life take mine; and though  
'Tis not so dear, yet 'tis a life; you coin'd it:  
'Tween man and man they weigh not every stamp;  
Though light, take pieces for the figure's sake:  
You rather mine, being yours: and so, great powers,  
If you will take this audit, take this life,  
And cancel these cold bonds. O Imogen!  
I'll speak to thee in silence.

*Sleeps*

*Solemn music. Enter, as in an apparition, SICILIUS LEONATUS, father to Posthumus Leonatus, an old man, attired like a warrior; leading in his hand an ancient matron, his wife, and mother to Posthumus Leonatus, with music before them: then, after other music, follow the two young Leonati, brothers to Posthumus Leonatus, with wounds as they died in the wars. They circle Posthumus Leonatus round, as he lies sleeping*

### **Sicilius Leonatus**

No more, thou thunder-master, show  
Thy spite on mortal flies:  
With Mars fall out, with Juno chide,  
That thy adulteries  
Rates and revenges.  
Hath my poor boy done aught but well,  
Whose face I never saw?  
I died whilst in the womb he stay'd  
Attending nature's law:  
Whose father then, as men report  
Thou orphans' father art,  
Thou shouldst have been, and shielded him  
From this earth-vexing smart.

### **Mother**

Lucina lent not me her aid,  
But took me in my throes;  
That from me was Posthumus ript,  
Came crying 'mongst his foes,  
A thing of pity!

### **Sicilius Leonatus**

Great nature, like his ancestry,  
Moulded the stuff so fair,  
That he deserved the praise o' the world,  
As great Sicilius' heir.

### **First Brother**

When once he was mature for man,  
In Britain where was he  
That could stand up his parallel;  
Or fruitful object be  
In eye of Imogen, that best  
Could deem his dignity?

### **Mother**

With marriage wherefore was he mock'd,  
To be exiled, and thrown  
From Leonati seat, and cast  
From her his dearest one,  
Sweet Imogen?

## **Sicilius Leonatus**

Why did you suffer Iachimo,  
Slight thing of Italy,  
To taint his nobler heart and brain  
With needless jealousy;  
And to become the geck and scorn  
O' th' other's villany?

## **Second Brother**

For this from stiller seats we came,  
Our parents and us twain,  
That striking in our country's cause  
Fell bravely and were slain,  
Our fealty and Tenantius' right  
With honour to maintain.

## **First Brother**

Like hardiment Posthumus hath  
To Cymbeline perform'd:  
Then, Jupiter, thou king of gods,  
Why hast thou thus adjourn'd  
The graces for his merits due,  
Being all to dolours turn'd?

## **Sicilius Leonatus**

Thy crystal window ope; look out;  
No longer exercise  
Upon a valiant race thy harsh  
And potent injuries.

## **Mother**

Since, Jupiter, our son is good,  
Take off his miseries.

## **Sicilius Leonatus**

Peep through thy marble mansion; help;  
Or we poor ghosts will cry  
To the shining synod of the rest  
Against thy deity.

## **First Brother Second Brother**

Help, Jupiter; or we appeal,  
And from thy justice fly.

*Jupiter descends in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle: he throws a thunderbolt. The Apparitions fall on their knees*

## **Jupiter**

No more, you petty spirits of region low,  
Offend our hearing; hush! How dare you ghosts  
Accuse the thunderer, whose bolt, you know,  
Sky-planted batters all rebelling coasts?  
Poor shadows of Elysium, hence, and rest  
Upon your never-withering banks of flowers:  
Be not with mortal accidents opprest;  
No care of yours it is; you know 'tis ours.  
Whom best I love I cross; to make my gift,  
The more delay'd, delighted. Be content;  
Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift:  
His comforts thrive, his trials well are spent.  
Our Jovial star reign'd at his birth, and in  
Our temple was he married. Rise, and fade.  
He shall be lord of lady Imogen,  
And happier much by his affliction made.  
This tablet lay upon his breast, wherein  
Our pleasure his full fortune doth confine:  
and so, away: no further with your din  
Express impatience, lest you stir up mine.  
Mount, eagle, to my palace crystalline.

*Ascends*

## **Sicilius Leonatus**

He came in thunder; his celestial breath  
Was sulphurous to smell: the holy eagle  
Stoop'd as to foot us: his ascension is  
More sweet than our blest fields: his royal bird  
Prunes the immortal wing and cloys his beak,  
As when his god is pleased.

## **All**

Thanks, Jupiter!

## **Sicilius Leonatus**

The marble pavement closes, he is enter'd  
His radiant root. Away! and, to be blest,  
Let us with care perform his great behest.

*The Apparitions vanish*

## **Posthumus Leonatus**

[Waking] Sleep, thou hast been a grandsire, and begot  
A father to me; and thou hast created  
A mother and two brothers: but, O scorn!

Gone! they went hence so soon as they were born:  
And so I am awake. Poor wretches that depend  
On greatness' favour dream as I have done,  
Wake and find nothing. But, alas, I swerve:  
Many dream not to find, neither deserve,  
And yet are steep'd in favours: so am I,  
That have this golden chance and know not why.  
What fairies haunt this ground? A book? O rare one!  
Be not, as is our fangled world, a garment  
Nobler than that it covers: let thy effects  
So follow, to be most unlike our courtiers,  
As good as promise.

*Reads*

'When as a lion's whelp shall, to himself unknown,  
without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of  
tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be  
lopped branches, which, being dead many years,  
shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock and  
freshly grow; then shall Posthumus end his miseries,  
Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty.'  
'Tis still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen  
Tongue and brain not; either both or nothing;  
Or senseless speaking or a speaking such  
As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,  
The action of my life is like it, which  
I'll keep, if but for sympathy.

*Re-enter First Gaoler*

**First Gaoler**

Come, sir, are you ready for death?

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Over-roasted rather; ready long ago.

**First Gaoler**

Hanging is the word, sir: if  
you be ready for that, you are well cooked.

**POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

So, if I prove a good repast to the  
spectators, the dish pays the shot.

**First Gaoler**

A heavy reckoning for you, sir. But the comfort is,  
you shall be called to no more payments, fear no

more tavern-bills; which are often the sadness of parting, as the procuring of mirth: you come in flint for want of meat, depart reeling with too much drink; sorry that you have paid too much, and sorry that you are paid too much; purse and brain both empty; the brain the heavier for being too light, the purse too light, being drawn of heaviness: of this contradiction you shall now be quit. O, the charity of a penny cord! It sums up thousands in a trice: you have no true debtor and creditor but it; of what's past, is, and to come, the discharge: your neck, sir, is pen, book and counters; so the acquittance follows.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

I am merrier to die than thou art to live.

### **First Gaoler**

Indeed, sir, he that sleeps feels not the tooth-ache: but a man that were to sleep your sleep, and a hangman to help him to bed, I think he would change places with his officer; for, look you, sir, you know not which way you shall go.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Yes, indeed do I, fellow.

### **First Gaoler**

Your death has eyes in 's head then; I have not seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some that take upon them to know, or do take upon yourself that which I am sure you do not know, or jump the after inquiry on your own peril: and how you shall speed in your journey's end, I think you'll never return to tell one.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

I tell thee, fellow, there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink and will not use them.

### **First Gaoler**

What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of eyes to see the way of blindness! I am sure hanging's the way of winking.

*Enter a Messenger*

## **Messenger**

Knock off his manacles; bring your prisoner to the king.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Thou bring'st good news; I am called to be made free.

## **First Gaoler**

I'll be hang'd then.

## **POSTHUMUS LEONATUS**

Thou shalt be then freer than a gaoler; no bolts for the dead.

*Exeunt POSTHUMUS LEONATUS and Messenger*

## **First Gaoler**

Unless a man would marry a gallows and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone. Yet, on my conscience, there are verier knaves desire to live, for all he be a Roman: and there be some of them too that die against their wills; so should I, if I were one. I would we were all of one mind, and one mind good; O, there were desolation of gaolers and gallowses! I speak against my present profit, but my wish hath a preferment in 't.

*Exeunt*