

Cymbeline abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 5

Despondent

Situation: Having been totally done-in by Iachimo's revelations following his visit with Imogen in London, Posthumus meekly turns over his ring to Iachimo and almost cowardly tells us he believes women are reliably "inconstant."

IACHIMO: Will you hear more?

POSTHUMUS: If you will swear you have not done 't, you lie, and I will kill thee if thou dost deny thou'st made me cuckold.

IACHIMO: I'll deny nothing.

POSTHUMUS: O, that I had her here, to tear her limb from limb! I will go there and do 't i' th' court, before her father. I'll do something.

PHILARIO: You have won. Let's follow him and avert the present wrath he hath against himself.

IACHIMO: With all my heart.

They exit. Posthumus is now alone on the stage.

Posthumus to Himself, No. 1

As I know not where the man I did know
As father was when I was stamped, my woe
Grows, now that my wife who prayed that I show
Forbearance of lawful pleasure, hath failed
Me. I viewed her as chaste as unsunned snow.
For their lack of impulse men should be hailed.
I affirm it's the women's rough edges:
Lying, flattering, rank thoughts, revenges,
Ambitions, disdain, erratically bold.
They're inconstant. For them a new vice grows
When the first wanton vice is half so old.
I may detest and curse them, yet it shows
More reason to pray they have their will for
The very devils cannot plague them more.