

Cymbeline abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 3

History

Situation: Belarius' boys are growing up and eager to become worldlier; Arviragus, one of the sons, saying "We have seen nothing." The boys have lived most of their life in a cave! Belarius unconvincingly tries to tell them that he's been out there in the world with scars to show for it and that he doesn't "miss the first part of my time."

BELARIUS: Now for our mountain sport. Up to yond hill; your legs are young. I'll tread these flats. When you above perceive me like a crow, you may then ponder what tales I have told you of courts, of princes, of the tricks of war. O, this life is nobler than waiting for a reprimand. That is no life to ours.

GUIDERIUS: Out of your proof you speak. We poor unfledged have never winged from view o' th' next, nor know not what air's from home. Haply this life is best if quiet life be best. Unto us it is a cell of ignorance.

ARVIRAGUS: What should we speak of when we are old as you? When we shall hear the rain and wind beat dark December, how in this our pinching cave shall we discourse the freezing hours away? We have seen nothing.

BELARIUS: How you speak! Did you but know the city's usuries and felt them knowingly; the toil o' th' war; the art o' th' court, as hard to leave as keep, whose top to climb is certain falling? O boys, this story the world may read in me.

Belarius to the Boys

**My body's marked with Roman swords; my fame
Was once first with the most noted; my name
Was never far off when soldiering was
The theme. Cymbeline loved me. As a tree
Was I, with boughs bent with fruit, but because
Men swore to Cymbeline that I must be
A spy for Rome, and my defense having failed,
I was banished, their lies having prevailed.
That fierce storm that night shook down my mellow
Hangings, and left me bare to weather. This
Rock and these lands for twenty years or so
Have been my world, and never do I miss
The first part of my time, living now in
Freedom, paying pious debts to heaven.**