

Cymbeline abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 6

Insight

Situation: Imogen, disguised as Fidele and on her way to Milford Haven, starved and exhausted “having made the ground my bed for two nights,” finds herself at Belarius’ cave. She helps herself to some of their food. The men soon return. They all get along just fine.

IMOGEN: I see a man’s life a tedious one.

Imogen to Herself

If not for my resolution I should
Be more tired, having done the best I could
For two nights, having made the ground my bed.
Within my sight from the mountain top I
Could see Milford, but was I thus misled,
Being told the way? If poor folks can lie,
It’s no wonder when rich ones scarce tell true.
My hunger’s gone, but I was ready to
Sink for lack of food. But what is this? ‘Tis
Some savage shelter, the path but the tip.
Yet famine makes nature valiant. It is
Plenty and peace that breeds cowards. Hardship
Is the mother of hardiness. Who’s here?
If I draw my sword then they too may fear.

She enters the cave as Fidele. The three men soon return to the cave.

BELARIUS: Come, our stomachs will make what’s homely savory.

GUIDERIUS: I am throughly weary.

ARVIRAGUS: I am weak with toil, yet strong in appetite.

Belarius looks into the cave.

BEALARIUS: Stay, come not in! But that it eats our victuals, I should think here were a fairy.

GUIDERIUS: What’s the matter, sir?

BELARIUS: Behold divineness no elder than a boy.

Imogen as Fidele greets them.

IMOGEN AS FIDELE: Good masters, harm me not. Good troth, I have stolen nothing, nor would not. Here’s money for my meat.