

The Winter's Tale abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 3

Observation

Situation: Antigonus and a Mariner are “upon the deserts of Bohemia.” Soon after the Mariner leaves, Antigonus “lays down the baby, a bundle, and a box.” A bear has chased him off, just before a shepherd enters.

ANTIGONUS: Poor wretch, that for thy mother's fault art thus exposed to loss and what may follow. Farewell, the day frowns more and more. I never saw the heavens so dim by day.

Thunder and sounds of hunting.

ANTIGONUS: This is the chase. I am gone forever.

He exits, pursued by a bear. A Shepherd enters.

Shepherd to Himself

I wish there were no age in-between ten
And twenty, or that they were slept through, when
There is nothing 'tween but wenchies getting
Children, stealing, youngsters wronging elders,
Fighting. Would any of those be hunting
In this weather, weather no one deserves?
Mercy, what have we here? A newborn child,
A pretty one, one left here in the wild,
Surely the result of some transgression.
Though I be not bookish, I can read more
Gentlewoman than strumpet. What's been done
Was done behind closed doors, secretly, for
Warmer they that 'got this than the baby
Is out here. I'll take it up for pity.

The Shepherd's son enters.

SHEPHERD: What ail'st thou, man?

SHEPHERD'S SON: I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land.

SHEPHERD: Why, boy, how is it?

SHEPHERD'S SON: O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls! Sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em. Now the ship boring the moon and her mainmast, and immediately swallowed with yeast and froth. And then for the land service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder bone, how he cried to me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But how the poor souls roared and the sea mocked them, and how the poor gentleman roared and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather.