

The Winter's Tale abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 2

Resignation

Situation: Convinced in his own mind that his friend-from-childhood Polixenes (Bohemia) “has touched his queen forbiddenly,” Leontes asks his friend and aide Camillo to kill Polixenes. Camillo meets with Polixenes, telling him “I am appointed him to murder you.” The two of them decide to leave Sicily immediately.

CAMILLO: My lord, go then and keep with Bohemia and with your queen. I am his cupbearer. If from me he have wholesome beverage, account me not your servant.

LEONTES: This is all. Do ‘t and thou hast the one half of my heart; do ‘t not, thou splitt’st thine own.

CAMILLO: I’ll do ‘t, my lord.

LEONTES: I will seem friendly, as thou hast advised me.

He exits.

Camillo to Himself

**O miserable queen! And too for me;
I’m here trapped. I must the poisoner be
Of good Polixenes; my reason for
Doing it is obedience to a
Master, whose every angry thought feeds more
Rebellion; but my doing the deed may
Lead to promotion. But if I could find
One who’d struck a king and flourished I’d mind
Not doing it. But since neither brass nor
Parchment bears not one let dour villainy
Forswear it. I face ruin whether or
Not I poison Polixenes. Let me
Leave the king’s court and therein disallow
This pledge. May a fortunate star reign now.**

CAMILLO: Here comes Bohemia.

Polixenes enters.