

Scene from *The Winter's Tale*

The Winter's Tale is all about a jealous king and his innocent queen, a message from the gods, a princess abandoned on a deserted shore, a prince that falls in love with a shepherdess, a statue that comes to life, and a BEAR!! Sound like a fairy tale to you? Sorry— there are no fairies (although one of the characters in the scene below is called a witch). Even without fairies, *The Winter's Tale* is still one of Shakespeare's most magical plays. Here is a scene for you to perform.

Speaking parts:

Lord

Paulina, the Queen's attendant

Antigonus, Paulina's husband

Servant
King Leontes

Non-speaking parts:

Other lords and attendants

Act 2, scene 3 (cut)

King Leontes has accused his pregnant wife of being unfaithful to him and thrown her into prison. While in prison, the innocent Queen has a baby girl. Her lady-in-waiting Paulina decides to take matters into her own hands and confronts the king with his daughter.

[Enter Paulina with the baby]

Lord:

You must not enter.

Paulina:

Fear you his tyrannous passion more, alas,
than the Queen's life?

Antigonus:

That's enough.

Servant:

Madame, he hath not slept tonight, commanded
none should come at him.

Paulina:

I come to bring him sleep.
I come with words as medicinal as true.

Leontes:

What noise there, ho?

Paulina:

No noise, my lord, but needful conference
for your highness.

Leontes:

How?

Away with that audacious lady! Antigonus,
I charged thee that she should not come about me.

Antigonus:

I told her so, my lord,
she should not visit you.

Leontes:

What? Canst not rule her?

Paulina:

From all dishonesty he can. In this,
he shall not rule me.
Good my liege, I come from your good queen.

Leontes:

Force her hence.

Paulina:

Let him that makes but trifles of his eyes
first hand me.
But first I'll do my errand. The good queen
hath brought you forth a daughter;
here 'tis; commends it to your blessing.

[She lays down the baby]

Leontes:

Out!

A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o' door!
Traitors!
Will you not push her out? Take it up I say; give it to the crone.

Paulina:

Forever unvenerable be thy hands if thou
tak'st up the Princess.

Leontes:

This brat is none of mine.
Hence with it, and together with the dam,
commit them to the fire.

Paulina:

It is yours.
Behold, my lords,
although the print be little, the copy of the father, eye, nose, lip,
the very mold and frame of hand, nail, finger.

Leontes:

A gross hag! [*To Antigonus*]
Thou art worthy to be hanged
that wilt not stay her tongue.

Antigonus:

Hang all the husbands
that cannot do that feat, you'll leave yourself
hardly one subject.

Leontes:

Once more take her hence.
Out of the chamber with her! Away with her.

Paulina:

I'll pray you do not push me, I'll be gone.
Look to your babe, my lord, 'tis yours. [*She exits.*]

Leontes:

Thou traitor, has set thy wife to this.
My child? Away with it.

Antigonus:

I did not sir.

Leontes:

You're liars all. You sir, come
you hither. What will you adventure
to save this brat's life?

Antigonus:

Anything, my lord,
I'll pawn the little blood which I have left
to save the innocent. Anything possible.

Leontes:

It shall be possible. Swear by this sword
thou wilt perform my bidding.

Antigonus:

I will, my lord.

Leontes:

Bear it to some remote and desert place,
and there leave it,
without more mercy to its own protection.
Take it up.

Antigonus:

Come on poor babe,
some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
to be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,
casting their savageness aside, have done offices of pity. [*He exits.*]