

HERMIONE

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say "Not guilty." Mine integrity,
Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
Be so received. But you, my lord, best know,
Whom least will seem to do so, my past life
Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true,
As I am now unhappy; which is more
Than history can pattern. For behold me,
A fellow of the royal bed, which owe
A moiety of the throne, a great king's daughter,
The mother to a hopeful prince, here standing
To prate and talk for life and honor fore
Who please to come and hear. For life, I prize it
As I weigh grief, which I would spare. For honor,
'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
And only that I stand for. I appeal
To your own conscience, sir, before Polixenes
Came to your court, how I was in your grace,
How merited to be so; since he came,
With what encounter so uncurrent I
Have strained t' appear thus; if one jot beyond
The bound of honor, or in act or will
That way inclining, hardened be the hearts
Of all that hear me, and my near'st of kin
Cry fie upon my grave.

LEONTES I ne'er heard yet

That any of these bolder vices wanted
Less impudence to gainsay what they did
Than to perform it first.

HERMIONE That's true enough,

Though 'tis a saying, sir, not due to me.

LEONTES

You will not own it.

HERMIONE More than mistress of

Which comes to me in name of fault, I must not
At all acknowledge. For Polixenes,
With whom I am accused, I do confess
I loved him as in honor he required,
With such a kind of love as might become
A lady like me, with a love even such,
So and no other, as yourself commanded,
Which not to have done, I think, had been in me
Both disobedience and ingratitude
To you and toward your friend, whose love had
spoke,

Even since it could speak, from an infant, freely
That it was yours. Now, for conspiracy,
I know not how it tastes. All that I know
Is that Camillo was an honest man.

LEONTES

You knew of his departure, as you know
What you have underta'en to do in 's absence.

HERMIONE Sir,

You speak a language that I understand not.
My life stands in the level of your dreams,
Which I'll lay down.

LEONTES Your actions are my dreams.

You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dreamed it. As you were past all shame—
Those of your fact are so—so past all truth,
Which to deny concerns more than avails; for as
Thy brat hath been cast out, like to itself,
No father owning it—which is indeed
More criminal in thee than it—so thou
Shalt feel our justice, in whose easiest passage
Look for no less than death.

HERMIONE Sir, spare your threats.

The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity.
The crown and comfort of my life, your favor,
I do give lost, for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy
And first fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barred like one infectious. My third comfort,
Starred most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder; myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet; with immodest hatred
The childbed privilege denied, which longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
Here to this place, i' th' open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed.
But yet hear this (mistake me not: no life,
I prize it not a straw, but for mine honor,
Which I would free), if I shall be condemned
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigor, and not law. Your Honors all,
I do refer me to the oracle.

Apollo be my judge.