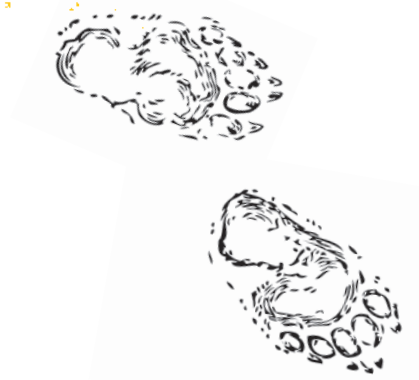


The Winter's Tale

By William Shakespeare



Plot Summary

ACT 1

Imagine the two faraway lands of Sicilia and Bohemia.

King Polixenes and **King Leontes** have been best friends since childhood.

King Polixenes has been visiting King Leontes and his beautiful wife **Queen Hermione** in their kingdom of Sicilia, but now he must return home to his kingdom Bohemia.

King Leontes begs him to stay longer. He refuses politely, but when Queen Hermione asks him, he agrees to stay.

King Leontes pretends to be happy, but is actually very jealous. He convinces himself that King Polixenes and Queen Hermione love each other, and are plotting to kill him.

He orders his servant **Camillo** to kill King Polixenes.

Camillo warns King Polixenes and they escape together to Bohemia.

ACT 2

Mamillius (Leontes and Hermione's son) is playing with his Mother, when King Leontes bursts in to accuses her publicly of loving his best friend and betraying him.

Queen Hermione is sent to prison, even though she is heavily pregnant.

King Leontes is convinced that Queen Hermione has betrayed him, but to calm the Lords he has sent messengers to **Apollo's** temple to hear what the Oracle thinks.

Queen Hermione gives birth to a baby girl in prison. **Paulina**, her faithful friend and servant says she will take the new born baby to King Leontes to melt his heart, and to make him realise the baby girl is his own daughter.

King Leontes is angry at Paulina's visit and refuses to believe that the baby is his own. He orders Paulina's husband **Antigonus** to kill the baby. Antigonus begs for mercy so King Leontes makes him promise to take the baby to a far away kingdom and to leave it to the mercy of the Gods.

ACT 3

The messengers return from Apollo's temple and a public trial is held.

King Leontes accuses Queen Hermione of adultery and treason. She denies everything and asks for Apollo to be her judge.

Apollo says that Hermione is chaste, Polixines blameless, and Leontes a jealous tyrant who will live without an heir if his child is not found.

King Leontes in his anger dismisses Apollo's judgment and orders for the trial to continue.

A servant runs in to inform King Leontes and Queen Hermione that their son Mamillius has died.

Queen Hermione faints. King Leontes realises he has angered the gods, and has been wrong about everything.

Paulina informs everyone that Queen Hermione has died.

King Leontes is left to grieve.

Antigonus reaches the Kingdom

of Bohemia with the baby girl amidst a terrible storm. He names the child **Perdita**, meaning 'lost' and leaves her on the shores to the mercy of the gods.

A **bear** comes along and chases him away.

A **Shepherd** finds the baby, along with gold. He promises to care for and raise her.

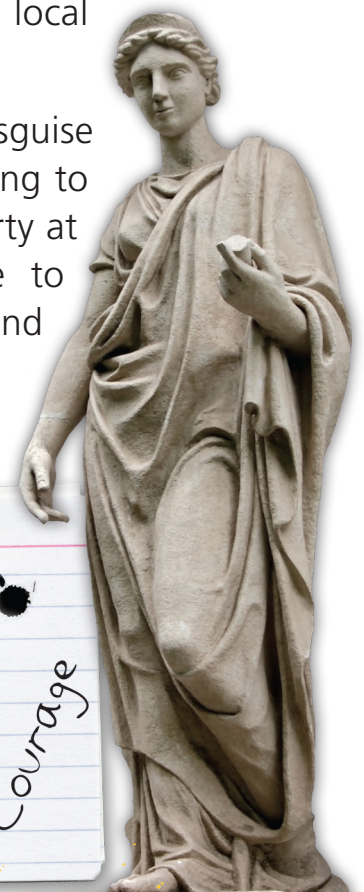
ACT 4

16 years pass.

Camillo has been working for King Polixines in Bohemia but is now keen to return home to Sicilia. King Polixines does not want Camillo to leave him, as he values his friendship.

King Polixines confides in Camillo that he believes his son **Prince Florizel** has fallen in love with a local Shepherd's daughter.

They decide to disguise themselves and go along to the sheep-shearing party at the Shepherd's house to see what they can find out.



Prince Florizel and Perdita are in love.

Prince Florizel declares his love for Perdita at the party, and asks the Shepherd to marry them. He agrees, but is stopped by the disguised King Polixines who asks Prince Florizel why he would get married without his own father's permission.

Prince Florizel dismisses him and decides to marry Perdita anyway. King Polixines reveals his true identity, condemns the relationship between his son and the girl he believes to be the Shepherd's daughter, threatens the Shepherd and says he will have nothing more to do with Florizel if he marries Perdita.

Prince Florizel and Perdita decide to run away to Sicilia, at Camillo's advice, and to seek refuge with the old King Leontes.

ACT 5

Back in Sicilia, King Leontes has been

grieving for his wife for 16 years.

The Lords advise him to remarry, to ensure that he has an heir to pass the throne to, but Paulina reminds him of the awful way he treated Hermione, and Apollo's declaration that Leontes will have no heir until his lost child is found. King Leontes promises that he will never re-marry without Paulina's permission.

Prince Florizel and Perdita arrive, and pretend they are visiting King Leontes on behalf of his old friend King Polixines. King Leontes is overjoyed to see them, and notes how beautiful Perdita is.

A servant informs everyone that King Polixines and Camillo have arrived in Bohemia, to chase Florizel who has run away from home. He also informs everyone that the Shepherd is in Bohemia, and is being questioned by King Polixines and Camillo.

Everyone meets and the truth is revealed.

What next?

Will King Leontes realise that Perdita is his long lost daughter?

Will King Polixines allow his son Florizel to marry Perdita?

Will King Polixines and King Leontes become friends again?

And what will they all think when they see the wonderful, lifelike statue of Hermione, made by the loyal Paulina?

All will be revealed when you come and see *The Winter's Tale re-imagined*.....

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre
29 June - 20 July 2013

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