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Cymbeline

Act III, sc. 3

BELARIUS: How you speak!
Did you but know the city's usuries
And felt them knowingly; the art o' the court,
As hard to leave as keep, whose top to climb
Is certain falling, or so slippery that
The fear's as bad as falling; the toil of the war,
A pain that only seems to seek out danger
I' the name of fame and honour; which dies i' the search,
And hath as oft a slanderous epitaph
As record of fair act; nay, many times,
Doth ill deserve by doing well; what's worse,
Must curtsy at the censure: O boys! this story
The world may read in me; my body's mark'd
With Roman swords, and my report was once
First with the best of note; Cymbeline lov'd me,
And when a soldier was the theme, my name
Was not far off; then was I as a tree
Whose boughs did bend with fruit, but, in one night,
A storm or robbery, call it what you will,
Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
And left me bare to weather.

Gui. Uncertain favour!

Bel. My fault being nothing, 'as I have told you oft,'
But that two villains, whose false oaths prevail'd
Before my perfect honour, swore to Cymbeline
I was confederate with the Romans;
Follow'd my banishment, and this twenty years
This rock and these demesnes have been my world,

Where I have liv'd at honest freedom, paid
More pious debts to heaven than in all
The fore-end of my time. But, up to the mountains!
This is not hunter's language. He that strikes
The venison first shall be the lord o' the feast;
To him the other two shall minister;
And we will fear no poison which attends In place of greater state. I'll meet you in the
valleys.

[Exeunt GUIDERIUS and ARVIRAGUS.]

How hard it is to hide the sparks of nature!
These boys know little they are sons to the king;
Nor Cymbeline dreams that they are alive.
They think they are mine; and, though train'd up thus meanly
I' the cave wherein they bow, their thoughts do hit
The roofs of palaces, and nature prompts them
In simple and low things to prince it much
Beyond the trick of others. This Polydore,
The heir of Cymbeline and Britain, who
The king his father call'd Guiderius, 'Jove!
When on my three-foot stool I sit and tell
The war-like feats I have done, his spirits fly out
Into my story: say, 'Thus mine enemy fell,
And thus I set my foot on 's neck;' even then
The princely blood flows in his cheek, he sweats,
Strains his young nerves, and puts himself in posture
That acts my words. The younger brother, Cadwal,
Once Arviragus, 'in as like a figure,
Strikes life into my speech and shows much more
His own conceiving. Hark! the game is rous'd.
O Cymbeline! heaven and my conscience knows
Thou didst unjustly banish me; whereon,
At three and two years old, I stole these babes,
Thinking to bar thee of succession, as
Thou reft'st me of my lands. Euriphile,
Thou wast their nurse; they took thee for their mother,
And every day do honour to her grave:
Myself, Belarius, that am Morgan call'd,
They take for natural father. The game is up.

[Exit.]