

The Winter's Tale A Synopsis by Mike Stack

Once upon a time, there was a King, a King, and a Queen... King Polixenes of Bohemia has been staying at King Leontes' court in Sicilia, and is persuaded by Queen Hermione to stay longer. But Leontes grows jealous of the affection between them, and convinces himself they are having an affair. He asks Camillo to poison Polixenes, but both of them flee to Bohemia. Leontes publicly accuses the pregnant Hermione and puts her in prison, sending messengers to Apollo's Oracle to confirm his suspicions.

Hermione gives birth, and Leontes banishes the baby, instructing Antigonus to abandon it far from Sicilia. Hermione is put on trial, but the Oracle proclaims her innocence, predicting that Leontes will have no heir if the banished baby is not found. Leontes rejects the Oracle, and immediately learns that his son has died. Hermione faints and is taken out as Leontes repents. Paulina returns to inform him that Hermione has also died. Leontes vows perpetual sorrow.

In Bohemia, Antigonus leaves the baby by itself, where it is discovered and adopted by a Shepherd and his son.

Time takes the play forward 16 years. In Bohemia, we meet the wandering musical rogue, Autolycus. Polixenes and Camillo disguise themselves to attend a pastoral festival in search of the king's son Florizel, where it is revealed that he plans to marry the Shepherd's adopted daughter, now called Perdita. Unhappy with this arrangement, Polixenes reveals himself and condemns the young couple. With the help of Camillo the two lovers escape to Sicilia, where the now pious Leontes still mourns. He welcomes them, and Florizel claims they are there with their father's knowledge.

Back in Bohemia, the Shepherd decides to tell Polixenes the truth about Perdita's birth, making her eligible for marriage to Florizel, and the musical rogue Autolycus helps them get to the court. They then all make their way to Sicilia.

Paulina invites everyone to view a remarkable sculpture of Hermione, claiming that she can make the statue move. And then...

