

Act III

APOLLO BE MY JUDGE

CLEOMENES AND DION - LORDS OF THE COURT OF LEONTES - HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM THEIR LONG JOURNEY ACROSS THE SEA TO GREECE



THEIR FRIENDS CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR WHAT VISITING THE ORACLE WAS LIKE - THEY'RE ALL A LITTLE BIT JEALOUS THAT THEY DIDN'T GET TO GO ON THIS IMPORTANT TRIP!

CLEOMENES TELLS THEM HOW BEAUTIFUL EVERYTHING WAS!



The temple



Statue of Apollo



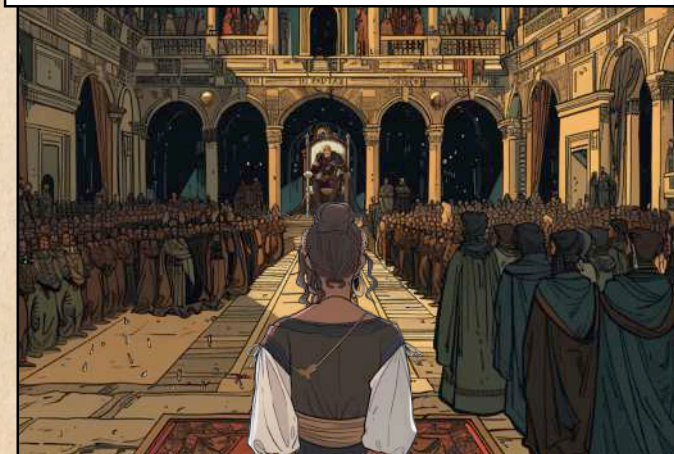
The Oracle!



DION WAS SUPER-IMPRESSED BY THE HUGE STATUE OF APOLLO. BUT WHAT REALLY BLEW THEM BOTH AWAY WAS THE ORACLE HERSELF - HOW LOUD SHE WAS!

IT'S A BIT LIKE THEY'VE COME BACK FROM A HOLIDAY, TILL EVERYONE NOTICES THE SEALED SCROLL THAT DION IS CARRYING, AND THEY ALL FALL SILENT. SUDDENLY EVERYONE REMEMBERS WHAT MESSAGE IS HIDDEN INSIDE, AND HOW SERIOUS THIS MOMENT IS. WHAT IS THE TRUTH THAT THE ORACLE WILL REVEAL? WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO HERMIONE?

THE ROOM IS FULL FOR THE TRIAL OF HERMIONE. EVERY MEMBER OF THE COURT IS THERE, YET, HERMIONE STANDS ALONE TO FACE HER ACCUSER.

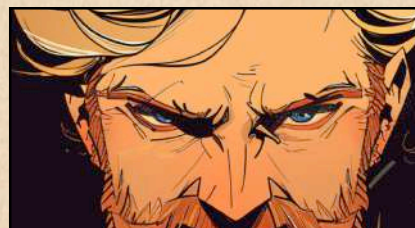


ALL BUT LEONTES BELIEVE HER TO BE INNOCENT, ALTHOUGH NO-ONE DARES SPEAK FOR HER.

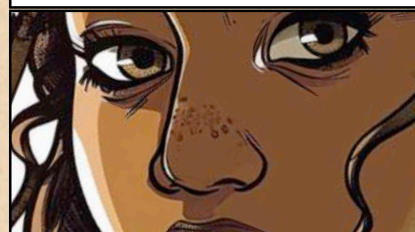
AN OFFICER READS THE CHARGES AGAINST HERMIONE...



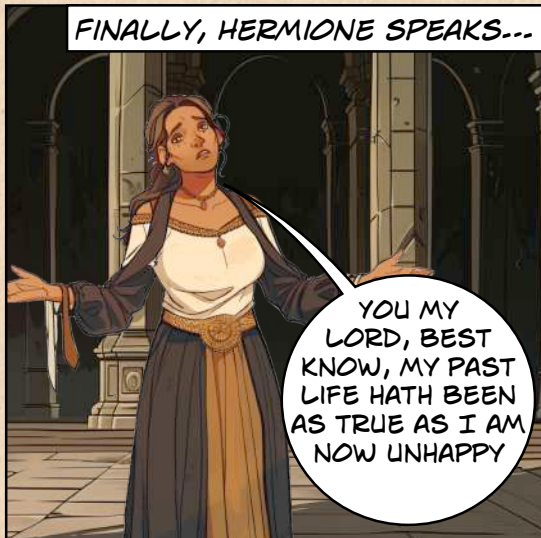
HERMIONE, THOU ART HERE ACCUSED OF HIGH TREASON, IN BETRAYING LEONTES WITH POLIXENES, AND CONSPIRING WITH CAMILLO TO TAKE AWAY THE LIFE OF OUR KING, THY HUSBAND



LEONTES STARES AT HIS WIFE - ONCE THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE - WITH HATRED. BUT THERE IS NO HATRED IN THE LOOK THAT HERMIONE RETURNS TO HIM - ONLY SORROW.



FINALLY, HERMIONE SPEAKS...



YOU MY LORD, BEST KNOW, MY PAST LIFE HATH BEEN AS TRUE AS I AM NOW UNHAPPY

FOR POLIXENES, WITH WHOM I AM ACCUSED, I DO CONFESS I LOVED HIM AS IN HONOUR HE REQUIRED: WITH SUCH KIND AS YOU YOURSELF COMMANDED



LEONTES SHOULD KNOW HOW FAITHFUL HERMIONE HAD ALWAYS BEEN UP UNTIL THE POINT AT WHICH HE ACCUSED HER. SHE LOVED POLIXENES ONLY IN THE WAY THAT A QUEEN **SHOULD** LOVE A VISITING KING AND FRIEND TO HER HUSBAND. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN WRONG FOR HER **NOT** TO LOVE HIM LIKE THIS. AND ANYWAY, IT WAS LEONTES WHO **TOLD HER** TO GET POLIXENES TO STAY!

NOW FOR CONSPIRACY, I KNOW NOT HOW IT TASTES. CAMILLO WAS AN HONEST MAN AND WHY HE LEFT YOUR COURT THE GODS THEMSELVES ARE IGNORANT



YOU **KNEW** OF HIS DEPARTURE!



SIR, YOU SPEAK A LANGUAGE THAT I UNDERSTAND **NOT**.



AT THAT MOMENT, THERE IS A NOISE AND EVERYONE TURNS TOWARDS THE GREAT DOORS...



THERE STAND CLEOMENES AND DION, HOLDING THE SCROLL...

THE SCROLL CONTAINING THE WORDS OF THE ORACLE...



THE CROWD HOLDS ITS BREATH...

THE SCROLL IS HANDED TO THE OFFICER. **THIS IS IT!** THESE ARE THE WORDS THE ORACLE SPOKE. EVERYONE STRAINS TO HEAR, IT'S AS IF THEY WERE ALL TRANSPORTED TO THAT TEMPLE IN DELPHI...

...HERMIONE IS CHASTE!



...POLIXENES BLAMELESS



...CAMILLO A TRUE SUBJECT!



...LEONTES A JEALOUS TYRANT!





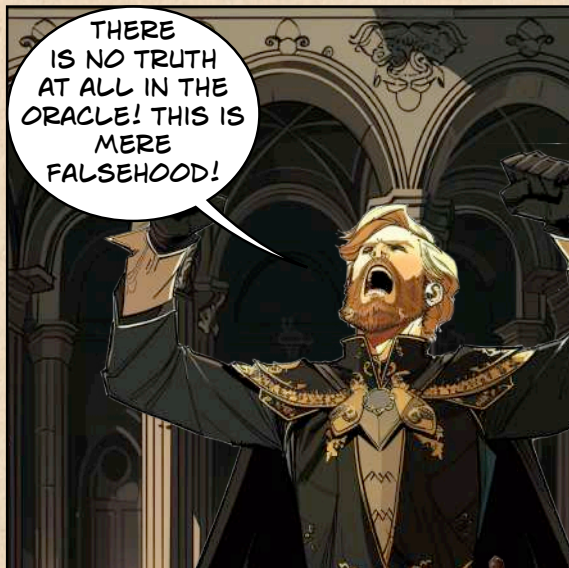
...HIS INNOCENT BABE TRULY BEGOTTEN; AND THE KING SHALL LIVE WITHOUT AN HEIR, IF THAT WHICH IS LOST BE NOT FOUND.



A GREAT CHEER FROM THE CROWD...

BLESSED BE THE GREAT APOLLO!!!

WOW! LET'S THINK ABOUT THE ORACLE'S WORDS FOR A MINUTE- HERMIONE HAS DONE **NOTHING** WRONG, **NOR** HAS POLIXENES, **NOR** HAS CAMILLO - BUT LEONTES HAS - HE'S A JEALOUS TYRANT - AND - HE SHALL LIVE WITHOUT AN HEIR? WHAT COULD THAT MEAN? ANYWAY, THE ORACLE HAS SPOKEN, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT NOW...



THERE IS NO TRUTH AT ALL IN THE ORACLE! THIS IS MERE FALSEHOOD!

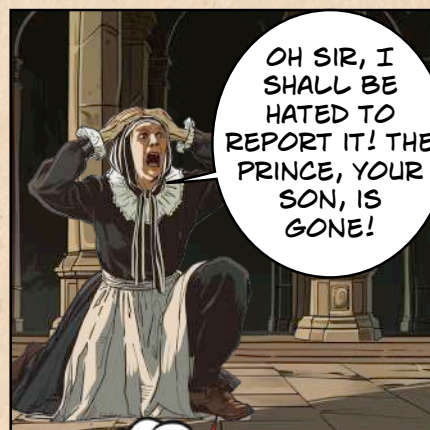
WAIT, WHAT? EVERYONE FREEZES. THIS IS THE GREATEST BLASPHEMY. LEONTES HAS JUST CALLED THE ORACLE, THE VOICE OF THE GOD APOLLO, A LIAR. THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE- ONCE APOLLO SPEAKS, THAT'S IT, YOU LISTEN. YOU **DON'T** QUESTION THE WORD OF A GOD. EVERYONE LOOKS AT EACH OTHER, WONDERING WHAT TO DO NEXT, WHEN SUDDENLY....



MY LORD THE KING, THE KING!



WHAT IS THE BUSINESS?



OH SIR, I SHALL BE HATED TO REPORT IT! THE PRINCE, YOUR SON, IS GONE!



HOW! GONE?



IS DEAD!



APOLLO'S ANGRY, AND THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES DO STRIKE AT MY INJUSTICE!

LIKE A TREE FELLED BY AN AXE, LEONTES FALLS TO HIS KNEES. IT SEEMS THAT APOLLO IS ALREADY PUNISHING HIM FOR QUESTIONING THE WORD OF A GOD AND NOW **POOR MAMILLIUS** IS GONE! BUT THERE IS STILL MORE TO COME FOR LEONTES...

HERMIONE FAINTS!

HOW NOW THERE!
TAKE HER HENCE!

APOLLO,
PARDON MY
GREAT
PROFANENESS
'AGAINST THINE
ORACLE

HER
HEART IS BUT
O'ERCHARGED,
SHE WILL
RECOVER.

LEONTES SLUMPS BACK ON HIS THRONE...

BUT THE WORST IS YET TO COME...

THE
QUEEN, THE QUEEN,
THE SWEET'ST DEAR'ST
CREATURE'S DEAD!

FAR AWAY FROM HERE, ANTIGONUS IS ABOUT TO CARRY OUT THE TERRIBLE TASK THAT LEONTES HAS SET HIM. HIS BOAT HAS LANDED ON THE SEA-COAST OF BOHEMIA AND A STORM LOOMS ON THE HORIZON...

ANTIGONUS IS ALSO IN A HURRY TO GET AWAY, BESIDES THE STORM, THIS COASTLINE IS A WILD DESOLATE PLACE PLAGUED BY WOLVES AND BEARS...

MAKE YOUR
BEST HASTE!

I AM GLAD
AT HEART TO BE
SO RID OF THE
BUSINESS

COME,
POOR BABE.
THERE LIE. AND
FOR THOU MAY BE
LOST FOREVER,
THY NAME SHALL
HENCEFORTH
PERDITA BE.

PERDITA MEANS 'SHE WHO HAS BEEN LOST' IN LATIN. I THINK WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT, AT THIS POINT IN THE PLAY, IN THIS LONELY PART OF THE WORLD, THIS POOR BABY IS WELL AND TRULY LOST!

ANTIGONUS PLACES SOME GOLD AND SOME OF HERMIONE'S JEWELS IN THE BASKET...



THE STORM BEGINS!

ANTIGONUS IS ABOUT TO RETURN TO HIS SHIP, WHEN SUDDENLY...

A HUGE BEAR EMERGES FROM AMONGST THE TREES!



THIS IS THE CHASE! I AM GONE FOREVER!

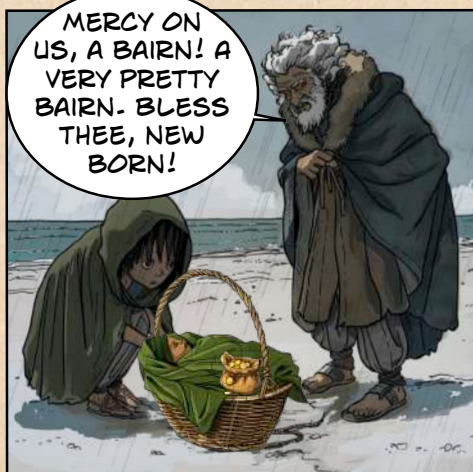
POOR PERDITA! HOW CAN SHE POSSIBLY SURVIVE - A NEW-BORN BABY ABANDONED IN A STORM IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, SURROUNDED BY FEARSOME CARNIVOROUS BEASTS? HOW CAN SHAKESPEARE DO THIS TO US?! I CAN ONLY SEE THIS STORY ENDING ONE WAY - IN TRAGEDY AND DESPAIR! I MUST BE RIGHT - AFTER ALL, EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR HAS BEEN DISASTROUS; THERE'S NO HOPE. OH, HANG ON, WHAT'S THIS? OR RATHER, WHO'S THIS...?

SUDDENLY TWO FIGURES APPROACH...



IT'S AN OLD SHEPHERD AND HIS YOUNG SON, BATTLING THROUGH THE RAIN AND WIND, TRYING TO GET HOME BEFORE NIGHTFALL...

MERCY ON US, A BAIRN! A VERY PRETTY BAIRN. BLESS THEE, NEW BORN!



GOLD! ALL GOLD! YOU'RE A MADE OLD MAN! HOME, HOME!

TIS A LUCKY DAY BOY!



WELL, I MUST ADMIT, I WAS WRONG. AND SO, AS ACT 3 DRAWS TO A CLOSE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, SOMETHING SEEMS TO HAVE GONE RIGHT. BABY PERDITA HAS BEEN FOUND AND A SHEPHERD HAS GOT HIMSELF SOME GOLD! STILL NO JOKES, THOUGH....