

# Cymbeline

Act III, sc. 3 (line 44)

## **ARVIRAGUS**

*What should we speak of  
When we are old as you? when we shall hear  
The rain and wind beat dark December, how,  
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse  
The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing;  
We are beastly, subtle as the fox for prey,  
Like warlike as the wolf for what we eat;  
Our valour is to chase what flies; our cage  
We make a quire, as doth the prison'd bird,  
And sing our bondage freely.*

## **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 o' 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 court'sy 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 loved 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.

**GUIDERIUS**

*Uncertain favour!*

**BELARIUS**

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: so  
Follow'd my banishment, and this twenty years  
This rock and these demesnes have been my world;  
Where I have lived 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 hunters' 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 warlike 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 roused!  
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.