



THE SPEECH

ACT III, SCENE 2

Hermione has been accused on no grounds at all of adultery with her husband's best friend Polixenes, imprisoned – where she has given birth to a daughter – and summoned to appear in court while still recovering from childbirth. She rejects the accusation (which has been read out by a court official), and in this speech she speaks directly to her husband Leontes after he declares that her new-born daughter is Polixenes's 'bastard', and threatens her with execution.

HERMIONE

Sir, spare your threats:
The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity:
The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost; for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy
And first-fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort
Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder: myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet: with immodest hatred
The child-bed privilege denied, which 'longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
Here to this place, i' the open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed.
But yet hear this: mistake me not; no life,
I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour,
Which I would free, if I shall be condemn'd
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigor and not law. Your honours all,
I do refer me to the oracle:
Apollo be my judge

Small Group
Coaching