

## Hermione's Ballad

'Tongue-tied? Speak you!' My king Leontes said,  
Silent, until prompted, I held my peace  
Urged to persuade my husband's friend to stay  
I spoke to please my lord, I did not cease.

Senseless jealousy seized upon his heart  
'Too hot, too hot!' My king Leontes cried,  
'To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods'  
Myself accused: hands too close, smiles too wide.

My husband turned, my two children seized  
My eldest son languished for want of me  
My newborn daughter, delivered in prison,  
Accused as a child of shame, sent to sea.

Accused before the royal tribunal  
Of betrayal and infidelity.  
My chastity and honor he dismissed.  
Why bother? What use to say "Not guilty"?



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## Hermione's Ballad

The oracle, the court, and Paulina  
All knew the Truth. Still he refused to see  
My honor and chastity true indeed.  
Look for no less than death was his decree.

Retreating from the scene, my death, I staged.  
Silenced, hopeless, before the loss of all.  
Silent, sixteen long years, I left the court.  
My hardened heart still beat for one hope small.

Still, strong, silent, I waited statuesque  
Leontes, begging pardon; I refused to speak  
And then one day, Perdita, returned to me  
To pay homage and my blessing to seek.

For her, I preserved myself those long years  
My daughter returned, I returned as well.  
Then, I spoke, invoking the god's graces.  
As her mother, my story I did tell.



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