



## Is whispering nothing?

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**Leontes:**

"Is whispering nothing?

Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?"

[The Winter's Tale \(I, ii, 284-285\)](#)

Leontes is sinking deeper and deeper into the (false) belief that his wife, Hermione, has been unfaithful to him with his childhood friend, Polixenes. There is no concrete evidence, as Hermione has been loyal, but Leontes is convinced of her infidelity and looks to so-called evidence, "whispering," "leaning cheek to cheek." Earlier, Leontes had wanted the visiting Polixenes to stay a while longer, and when Polixenes said he must return to his own kingdom, Leontes engaged Hermione in trying to persuade his friend to remain. She was successful, and suddenly Leontes grew suspicious, looking to innocent acts as proof of guilt. As he falls deeper into this "diseased opinion" he finally orders Camillo, one of his lords, to kill Polixenes. Instead, Camillo warns Polixenes, and they both flee Leontes' kingdom.

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