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William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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TITUS ANDRONICUS.

VOL. VI.

B

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SATURNINUS, *Son to the late Emperor of Rome, and afterwards declared Emperor himself.*

BASSIANUS, *Brother to Saturninus; in love with Lavinia.*

TITUS ANDRONICUS, *a noble Roman, General against the Goths.*

MARCUS ANDRONICUS, *Tribune of the People; and Brother to Titus.*

LUCIUS,
 QUINTUS,
 MARTIUS,
 MUTIUS,

} *Sons to Titus Andronicus.*

YOUNG LUCIUS, *a Boy, Son to Lucius.*

PUBLIUS, *Son to Marcus the Tribune.*

ÆMILIUS, *a noble Roman.*

ALARBUS,
 CHIRON,
 DEMETRIUS,

} *Sons to Tamora.*

AARON, *a Moor, beloved by Tamora.*

A CAPTAIN, TRIBUNE, MESSENGER, AND CLOWN; *Romans.*

GOths AND ROMANS.

TAMORA, *Queen of the Goths.*

LAVINIA, *Daughter to Titus Andronicus.*

A NURSE, AND A BLACK CHILD.

*Kinsmen of Titus, Senators, Tribunes, Officers, Soldiers,
 and Attendants.*

SCENE—Rome; and the Country near it.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—ROME. *Before the Capitol.*

The Tomb of the ANDRONICI appearing: the TRIBUNES and SENATORS aloft, as in the Senate. Enter, below, SATURNINUS and his Followers, on one Side; and BASSIANUS and his Followers, on the other; with Drum and Colours.

Saturninus. Noble patricians, patrons of my right,
 Defend the justice of my cause with arms;
 And, countrymen, my loving followers,
 Plead my successive title¹ with your swords;
 I am his first-born son, that was the last
 That ware the imperial diadem of Rome;
 Then let my father's honours live in me,
 Nor wrong mine age with this indignity.

Bassianus. Romans,—friends, followers, favourers of
 my right,—
 If ever Bassianus, Cæsar's son,
 Were gracious in the eyes of royal Rome,
 Keep then this passage to the Capitol;
 And suffer not dishonour to approach
 The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,
 To justice, continence, and nobility:
 But let desert in pure election shine;
 And, Romans, fight for freedom in your choice.

¹ *i. e.*, My title to the succession.

Enter MARCUS ANDRONICUS *aloft, with the Crown.*

Marcus. Princes that strive by factions, and by friends,
 Ambitiously for rule and empery,—
 Know, that the people of Rome, for whom we stand
 A special party, have by their common voice,
 In election for the Roman empery,
 Chosen Andronicus, surnamed Pius
 For many good and great deserts to Rome;
 A nobler man, a braver warrior,
 Lives not this day within the city walls:
 He by the senate is accited² home,
 From weary wars against the barbarous Goths;
 That, with his sons, a terror to our foes,
 Hath yok'd a nation strong, train'd up in arms.
 Ten years are spent, since first he undertook
 This cause of Rome, and chastised with arms
 Our enemies' pride: Five times he hath return'd
 Bleeding to Rome, bearing his valiant sons
 In coffins from the field;
 And now at last, laden with honour's spoils,
 Returns the good Andronicus to Rome,
 Renowned Titus, flourishing in arms.
 Let us entreat,—By honour of his name,
 Whom, worthily, you would have now succeed,
 And in the Capitol and senate's right,
 Whom you pretend to honour and adore,—
 That you withdraw you, and abate your strength;
 Dismiss your followers, and, as suitors should,
 Plead your deserts in peace and humbleness.

Saturninus. How fair the tribune speaks to calm my
 thoughts!

Bassianus. Marcus Andronicus, so do I affy
 In thy uprightness and integrity,
 And so I love and honour thee and thine,
 Thy nobler brother Titus, and his sons,
 And her, to whom my thoughts are humbled all,
 Gracious Lavinia, Rome's rich ornament,

² Summoned.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

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That I will here dismiss my loving friends;
 And to my fortunes, and the people's favour,
 Commit my cause in balance to be weigh'd.

[*Exeunt the Followers of BASSIANUS.*

Saturninus. Friends, that have been thus forward in
 my right,

I thank you all, and here dismiss you all;
 And to the love and favour of my country
 Commit myself, my person, and the cause.

[*Exeunt the Followers of SATURNINUS.*

Rome, be as just and gracious unto me,
 As I am confident and kind to thee.—
 Open the gates, and let me in.

Bassianus. Tribunes! and me, a poor competitor.

[*SATURNINUS and BASSIANUS go into the Capitol,
 and exeunt with SENATORS, MARCUS, &c.*

SCENE II.—*The same.*

Enter a CAPTAIN, and Others.

Captain. Romans, make way; the good Andronicus,
 Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion,
 Successful in the battles that he fights,
 With honour and with fortune is return'd,
 From where he circumscribed with his sword,
 And brought to yoke, the enemies of Rome.

*Flourish of Trumpets, &c. Enter MUTIUS and MARTIUS:
 after them, two Men bearing a Coffin covered with
 black; then QUINTUS and LUCIUS. After them, TITUS
 ANDRONICUS; and then, TAMORA, with ALARBUS, CHI-
 RON, DEMETRIUS, AARON, and other GOTHs, Prisoners;
 SOLDIERS and PEOPLE, following. The Bearers set
 down the Coffin, and TITUS speaks.*

Titus. Hail Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!
 Lo, as the bark that hath discharg'd her fraught,
 Returns with precious lading to the bay,
 From whence at first she weigh'd her anchorage,
 Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,

To re-salute his country with his tears;
 Tears of true joy for his return to Rome.—
 Thou great defender of this Capitol,
 Stand gracious to the rites that we intend!
 Romans, of five and twenty valiant sons,
 Half of the number that king Priam had,
 Behold the poor remains, alive, and dead!
 These, that survive, let Rome reward with love;
 These, that I bring unto their latest home,
 With burial amongst their ancestors:
 Here Goths have given me leave to sheath my sword.
 Titus, unkind, and careless of thine own,
 Why suffer'st thou thy sons, unburied yet,
 To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?—
 Make way to lay them by their brethren.

[*The Tomb is opened.*]

There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,
 And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars!
 O sacred receptacle of my joys,
 Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,
 How many sons of mine hast thou in store,
 That thou wilt never render to me more!

Lucius. Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
 That we may hew his limbs, and, on a pile,
Ad manes fratrum sacrifice his flesh,
 Before this earthly prison of their bones;
 That so the shadows be not unappeas'd,
 Nor we disturb'd with prodigies on earth.³

Titus. I give him you; the noblest that survives,
 The eldest son of this distressed queen.

Tamora. Stay, Roman brethren;—Gracious conqueror,
 Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
 A mother's tears in passion⁴ for her son:
 And, if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
 O, think my son to be as dear to me.
 Sufficeth not, that we are brought to Rome,
 To beautify thy triumphs, and return,

³ It was supposed that the ghosts of unburied people appeared to solicit the rites of funeral.

⁴ Suffering.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

Captive to thee, and to thy Roman yoke ;
 But must my sons be slaughter'd in the streets,
 For valiant doings in their country's cause ?
 O ! if to fight for king and common-weal
 Were piety in thine, it is in these.

Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood :
 Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods ?
 Draw near them then in being merciful :
 Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge ;
 Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

Titus. Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
 These are their brethren, whom you Goths beheld
 Alive, and dead ; and for their brethren slain,
 Religiously they ask a sacrifice :
 To this your son is mark'd ; and die he must,
 To appease their groaning shadows that are gone.

Lucius. Away with him ! and make a fire straight ;
 And with our swords, upon a pile of wood,
 Let's hew his limbs, till they be clean consum'd.

[*Exeunt* LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS,
 and MUTIUS, with ALARBUS.

Tamora. O cruel irreligious piety !

Chiron. Was ever Scythia half so barbarous ?

Demetrius. Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome.
 Alarbus goes to rest ; and we survive
 To tremble under Titus' threatening look.
 Then, madam, stand resolv'd : but hope withal,
 The self-same gods, that arm'd the queen of Troy
 With opportunity of sharp revenge
 Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent,
 May favour Tamora, the queen of Goths,
 (When Goths were Goths, and Tamora was queen,)
 To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes.

Re-enter LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS, and MUTIUS, with
 their Swords bloody.

Lucius. See lord and father, how we have perform'd
 Our Roman rites : Alarbus' limbs are lopp'd,
 And entrails feed the sacrificing fire,

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TITUS ANDRONICUS.

Whose smoke, like incense, doth perfume the sky.
Remaineth nought, but to inter our brethren,
And with loud 'larums welcome them to Rome.

Titus. Let it be so, and let Andronicus
Make this his latest farewell to their souls.

[*Trumpets sounded, and the Coffins laid
in the Tomb.*]

In peace and honour rest you here, my sons;
Rome's readiest champions, repose you here,
Secure from worldly chances and mishaps!
Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no inward grudges; here are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep:

Enter LAVINIA.

In peace and honour rest you here, my sons!

Lavinia. In peace and honour live lord Titus long;
My noble lord and father, live in fame!
Lo! at this tomb my tributary tears
I render, for my brethren's obsequies;
And at thy feet I kneel with tears of joy
Shed on the earth, for thy return to Rome:
O, bless me here with thy victorious hand,
Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud.

Titus. Kind Rome, that hast thus lovingly reserv'd
The cordial of mine age to glad my heart!—
Lavinia, live; outlive thy father's days,
And fame's eternal date, for virtue's praise!

*Enter MARCUS ANDRONICUS, SATURNINUS, BASSIANUS,
and Others.*

Marcus. Long live lord Titus, my beloved brother,
Gracious triumpher in the eyes of Rome!

Titus. Thanks, gentle tribune, noble brother Marcus.

Marcus. And welcome, nephews, from successful wars,
You that survive, and you that sleep in fame.
Fair lords, your fortunes are alike in all,
That in your country's service drew your swords:
But safer triumph is this funeral pomp,

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

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That hath aspir'd to Solon's happiness,⁶
 And triumphs over chance, in honour's bed.—
 Titus Andronicus, the people of Rome,
 Whose friend in justice thou hast ever been,
 Send thee by me, their tribune, and their trust,
 This palliament⁷ of white and spotless hue;
 And name thee in election for the empire,
 With these our late-deceased emperor's sons:
 Be *canditatus* then, and put it on,
 And help to set a head on headless Rome.

Titus. A better head her glorious body fits,
 Than his that shakes for age and feebleness:
 What! should I don⁸ this robe, and trouble you?
 Be chosen with proclamations to-day;
 To-morrow yield up rule, resign my life,
 And set abroad new business for you all?
 Rome, I have been thy soldier forty years,
 And led my country's strength successfully
 And buried one-and-twenty valiant sons,
 Knighted in field, slain manfully in arms,
 In right and service of their noble country:
 Give me a staff of honour for mine age,
 But not a scepter to control the world:
 Upright he held it, lords, that held it last.

Marcus. Titus, thou shalt obtain and ask the empery.

Saturninus. Proud and ambitious tribune, canst thou tell?—

Titus. Patience, prince Saturnine.

Saturninus. Romans, do me right;—

Patricians, draw your swords, and sheath them not
 Till Saturninus be Rome's emperor:—

Andronicus, 'would thou wert shipp'd to hell,
 Rather than rob me of the people's hearts.

Lucius. Proud Saturnine, interrupter of the good
 That noble-minded Titus means to thee!

Titus. Content thee, prince; I will restore to thee
 The people's hearts, and wean them from themselves.

⁶ The maxim alluded to is, that no man can be pronounced happy before his death.

⁷ A robe.

⁸ *i. e.*, Do on, put it on.

Bassianus. Andronicus, I do not flatter thee,
But honour thee, and will do till I die;
My faction if thou strengthen with thy friends,
I will most thankful be: and thanks, to men
Of noble minds, is honourable meed.

Titus. People of Rome, and people's tribunes here,
I ask your voices and your suffrages;
Will you bestow them friendly on Andronicus?

Tribunes. To gratify the good Andronicus,
And gratulate his safe return to Rome,
The people will accept whom he admits.

Titus. Tribunes, I thank you: and this suit I make,
That you create your emperor's eldest son,
Lord Saturnine; whose virtues will, I hope,
Reflect on Rome, as Titan's⁹ rays on earth,
And ripen justice in this common-weal:
Then if you will elect by my advice,
Crown him, and say,—*Long live our emperor!*

Marcus. With voices and applause of every sort,
Patricians, and plebeians, we create
Lord Saturninus, Rome's great emperor;
And say,—*Long live our emperor Saturnine!*

[*A long Flourish.*]

Saturninus. Titus Andronicus, for thy favours done
To us in our election this day,
I give thee thanks in part of thy deserts,
And will with deeds requite thy gentleness:
And, for an onset, Titus, to advance
Thy name, and honourable family,
Lavinia will I make my emperess,
Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart,
And in the sacred Pantheon her espouse:
Tell me, Andronicus, doth this motion please thee?

Titus. It doth, my worthy lord; and, in this match
I hold me highly honour'd of your grace:
And here, in sight of Rome, to Saturnine,—
King and commander of our common-weal,
The wide world's emperor,—do I consecrate

⁹ The sun.