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978-1-108-00574-6 - Antony and Cleopatra, Volume 2

William Shakespeare

Excerpt

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ANTONY & CLEOPATRA

The scene: the Roman Empire
 CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

ANTONY	}	<i>triumvirs</i>
OCTAVIUS CAESAR		
LEPIDUS		
SEXTUS POMPEIUS	}	<i>friends to Antony</i>
DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS		
VENTIDIUS		
EROS		
SCARUS		
DERCETUS		
DEMETRIUS		
PHILO	}	<i>friends to Caesar</i>
MAECENAS		
AGRIPPA		
DOLABELLA		
PROCULEIUS		
THIDIAS		
GALLUS	}	<i>friends to Sextus Pompeius</i>
MENAS		
MENECRATES		
VARRIUS		
TAURUS, lieutenant-general to Caesar		
CANIDIUS, lieutenant-general to Antony		
SILIUS, an officer in Ventidius's army		
A Schoolmaster, ambassador from Antony to Caesar		
ALEXAS	}	<i>attendants on Cleopatra</i>
MARDIAN, a eunuch		
SELEUCUS		
DIOMEDES		
A Soothsayer		
A Clown		
CLEOPATRA, queen of Egypt		
OCTAVIA, sister to Caesar, and wife to Antony		
CHARMIAN	}	<i>attendants on Cleopatra</i>
IRAS		
Officers, soldiers, messengers, and other attendants		

ANTONY & CLEOPATRA

[I. I.] *Alexandria. A room in Cleopatra's palace*

Enter DEMETRIUS and PHILO

Philo. Nay, but this dotage of our general's
 O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
 That o'er the files and musters of the war
 Have glowed like plated Mars—now bend, now turn,
 The office and devotion of their view
 Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
 Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
 The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
 And is become the bellows and the fan
 To cool a gipsy's lust.

*Flourish. Enter ANTONY, CLEOPATRA, her ladies,
 the train, with eunuchs fanning her*

Look where they come: 10
 Take but good note, and you shall see in him
 The triple pillar of the world transformed
 Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see.

Cleopatra. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

Antony. There's beggary in the love that can
 be reckoned.

Cleopatra. I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.

Antony. Then must thou needs find out new heaven,
 new earth.

Enter an Attendant

Attendant. News, my good lord, from Rome.

Antony. Grates me! the sum.

4 ANTONY & CLEOPATRA I. I. 19

Cleopatra. Nay, hear them, Antony:

- 20 Fulvia perchance is angry; or, who knows
 If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
 His powerful mandate to you, 'Do this, or this;
 Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;
 Perform't, or else we damn thee.'

Antony. How, my love?

- Cleopatra.* Perchance? nay, and most like:
 You must not stay here longer, your dismissal
 Is come from Caesar; therefore hear it, Antony.
 Where's Fulvia's process? Caesar's I would say? both?
 Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen,
 30 Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine
 Is Caesar's homager: else so thy cheek pays shame
 When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers!

Antony. Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
 Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
 Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike
 Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life
 Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair [*embracing*
 And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
 On pain of punishment, the world to weet
 We stand up peerless.

- 40 *Cleopatra.* Excellent falsehood!
 Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?
 I'll seem the fool I am not; Antony
 Will be himself.

Antony. But stirred by Cleopatra.
 Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours,
 Let's not confound the time with conference harsh:
 There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
 Without some pleasure new. What sport to-night?

Cleopatra. Hear the ambassadors.

Antony. Fie, wrangling queen!

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I. I. 49 ANTONY & CLEOPATRA 5

Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,
 To weep; whose every passion fully strives 50
 To make itself, in thee, fair and admired!
 No messenger but thine, and all alone
 To-night we'll wander through the streets and note
 The qualities of people. Come, my queen;
 Last night you did desire it. [*to the Attendant*] Speak
 not to us.

[*Antony and Cleopatra depart with their train*]

Demetrius. Is Caesar with Antonius prized so slight?

Philo. Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,
 He comes too short of that great property
 Which still should go with Antony.

Demetrius. I am full sorry

That he approves the common liar, who 60
 Thus speaks of him at Rome: but I will hope
 Of better deeds to-morrow. Rest you happy! [*they go*]

[I. 2.] *The same; some hours later. Servants bearing dishes pass to and from a room beyond, whence a sound of feasting is heard. Presently enter from the feast ENOBARBUS and three other Romans talking with a Soothsayer; and, a little after, Cleopatra's attendants CHARMIAN, IRAS, MARDIAN the Eunuch, and ALEXAS*

Charmian. Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most any thing
 Alexas, almost most absolute Alexas, where's the sooth-
 sayer that you praised so to th'queen? O, that I knew
 this husband, which, you say, must charge his horns
 with garlands!

Alexas. Soothsayer!

Soothsayer. Your will?

Charmian. Is this the man? Is't you, sir, that
 know things?

6 ANTONY & CLEOPATRA 1.2.9

- Soothsayer.* In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
 A little I can read.
- 10 *Alexas.* Show him your hand.
[she holds it forth]
- Enobarbus.* *[to a servant]* Bring in the banquet
 quickly; wine enough
 Cleopatra's health to drink.
[servants set fruit, wine, etc. on a table]
- Charmian.* Good sir, give me good fortune.
- Soothsayer.* I make not, but foresee.
- Charmian.* Pray then, foresee me one.
- Soothsayer.* You shall be yet far fairer than you are.
- Charmian.* He means in flesh.
- Iras.* No, you shall paint when you are old.
- Charmian.* Wrinkles forbid!
- 20 *Alexas.* Vex not his prescience, be attentive.
Charmian. Hush!
Soothsayer. You shall be more loving than beloved.
Charmian. I had rather heat my liver with drinking.
Alexas. Nay, hear him.
Charmian. Good now, some excellent fortune! Let me
 be married to three kings in a forenoon, and widow
 them all: let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod
 of Jewry may do homage: find me to marry me with
 Octavius Caesar, and companion me with my mistress.
- 30 *Soothsayer.* You shall outlive the lady whom you serve.
Charmian. O excellent! I love long life better than figs.
Soothsayer. You have seen and proved a fairer
 former fortune
 Than that which is to approach.
Charmian. Then belike my children shall have no
 names: prithee, how many boys and wenches must
 I have?
Soothsayer. If every of your wishes had a womb,

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1.2.38 ANTONY & CLEOPATRA 7

And fertile every wish, a million.

Charmian. Out, fool! I forgive thee for a witch.

Alexas. You think none but your sheets are privy to 40
 your wishes.

Charmian. Nay, come; tell Iras hers.

Alexas. We'll know all our fortunes.

Enobarbus. Mine and most of our fortunes to-night
 shall be—drunk to bed. [pours out wine]

Iras. [holds out her hand] There's a palm presages
 chastity, if nothing else.

Charmian. E'en as the o'erflowing Nilus presageth
 famine.

Iras. Go, you wild bedfellow, you cannot soothsay. 50

Charmian. Nay, if an oily palm be not a fruitful
 prognostication, I cannot scratch mine ear. Prithee,
 tell her but a worky-day fortune.

Soothsayer. Your fortunes are alike.

Iras. But how, but how? give me particulars.

Soothsayer. I have said.

Iras. Am I not an inch of fortune better than she?

Charmian. Well, if you were but an inch of fortune
 better than I. . . where would you choose it?

Iras. Not in my husband's nose. 60

Charmian. Our worser thoughts heavens mend!
 Alexas—come, his fortune, his fortune! O, let him
 marry a woman that cannot go, sweet Isis, I beseech
 thee! and let her die too, and give him a worse! and
 let worse follow worse, till the worst of all follow
 him laughing to his grave, fifty-fold a cuckold! Good
 Isis, hear me this prayer, though thou deny me a
 matter of more weight; good Isis, I beseech thee!

Iras. Amen, dear goddess, hear that prayer of thy
 people! For, as it is a heart-breaking to see a handsome 70
 man loose-wived, so it is a deadly sorrow to behold

1.2.99 ANTONY & CLEOPATRA 9

Who tells me true, though in his tale lie death,
 I hear him as he flattered.

Messenger. Labienus— 100

This is stiff news—hath with his Parthian force
 Extended Asia from Euphrates,
 His conquering banner shook from Syria
 To Lydia and to Ionia,
 Whilst—

Antony. Antony, thou wouldst say—

Messenger. O, my lord!

Antony. Speak to me home, mince not the
 general tongue,

Name Cleopatra as she is called in Rome;
 Rail thou in Fulvia's phrase, and taunt my faults
 With such full license as both truth and malice
 Have power to utter. O, then we bring forth weeds 110
 When our quick minds lie still, and our ills told us
 Is as our earring. Fare thee well awhile.

Messenger. At your noble pleasure. [*he goes*]

Antony. From Sicyon, ho, the news! Speak there!

1 *Attendant.* [*opens the door and calls*] The man from
 Sicyon, is there such an one?

2 *Attendant.* [*hurries in*] He stays upon your will

Antony. Let him appear.

These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
 Or lose myself in dotage.

Enter another Messenger, with a letter

What are you?

2 *Messenger.* Fulvia thy wife is dead.

Antony. Where died she?

2 *Messenger.* In Sicyon: 120

Her length of sickness, with what else more serious
 Importeth thee to know, this bears. [*gives a letter*]

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10 **ANTONY & CLEOPATRA** 1.2.122

Antony.

Forbear me.

[*Messenger and Attendants withdraw*]

There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it:

What our contempts doth often hurl from us,

We wish it ours again; the present pleasure,

By revolution lowering, does become

The opposite of itself: she's good, being gone;

The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on.

I must from this enchanting queen break off:

130 Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,

My idleness doth hatch. Ho, now! Enobarbus!

ENOBARBUS returns

Enobarbus. What's your pleasure, sir?

Antony. I must with haste from hence.

Enobarbus. Why then we kill all our women. We see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure death's the word.

Antony. I must be gone.

Enobarbus. Under a compelling occasion let women die. It were pity to cast them away for nothing, though
 140 between them and a great cause they should be esteemed nothing. Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment: I do think there is mettle in death, which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying.

Antony. She is cunning past man's thought.

Enobarbus. Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater
 150 storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove.