

Antony and Cleopatra

William Shakespeare



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[Antony and Cleopatra](#)

[Act 1](#)

[Act 2](#)

[Act 3](#)

[Act 4](#)

[Act 5](#)

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Act 1



Scene 1

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 glow'd 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:

Take but good note, and you shall see in him.

The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see.

CLEOPATRA: If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

MARK ANTONY: There's beggary in the love that can be
reckon'd.

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

MARK ANTONY: Then must thou needs find out new
heaven, new earth.

Enter an Attendant

Attendant: News, my good lord, from Rome.

MARK ANTONY: Grates me: the sum.

CLEOPATRA: Nay, hear them, Antony:

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.'

MARK 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,
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!

MARK 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.

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

MARK ANTONY: But stirr'd 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 now. What sport tonight?

CLEOPATRA: Hear the ambassadors.

MARK ANTONY: Fie, wrangling queen!
Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,
To weep; whose every passion fully strives
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: speak not to us.
Exeunt MARK ANTONY and CLEOPATRA 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
Thus speaks of him at Rome: but I will hope
Of better deeds to-morrow. Rest you happy!
Exeunt

Scene 2

The same. Another room.
Enter CHARMIAN, IRAS, ALEXAS, and a Soothsayer
CHARMIAN: Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most any thing
Alexas,
almost most absolute Alexas, where's the soothsayer
that you praised so to the 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?

Soothsayer: In nature's infinite book of secrecy

A little I can read.

ALEXAS: Show him your hand.

Enter DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Bring in the banquet quickly;

wine enough

Cleopatra's health to drink.

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!

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.

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.

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 your wishes.

CHARMIAN: Nay, come, tell Iras hers.

ALEXAS: We'll know all our fortunes.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Mine, and most of our fortunes, to-night, shall be--drunk to bed.

IRAS: 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.

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.

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 worst 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 the people! for, as it is a heartbreaking to see a handsome man loose-wived, so it is a deadly sorrow to behold a

foul knave uncuckolded: therefore, dear Isis, keep decorum, and fortune him accordingly!

CHARMIAN: Amen.

ALEXAS: Lo, now, if it lay in their hands to make me a cuckold, they would make themselves whores, but they'd do't!

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Hush! here comes Antony.

CHARMIAN: Not he; the queen.

Enter CLEOPATRA

CLEOPATRA: Saw you my lord?

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: No, lady.

CLEOPATRA: Was he not here?

CHARMIAN: No, madam.

CLEOPATRA: He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden A Roman thought hath struck him. Enobarbus!

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Madam?

CLEOPATRA: Seek him, and bring him hither.

Where's Alexas?

ALEXAS: Here, at your service. My lord approaches.

CLEOPATRA: We will not look upon him: go with us.

Exeunt

Enter MARK ANTONY with a Messenger and Attendants

Messenger: Fulvia thy wife first came into the field.

MARK ANTONY: Against my brother Lucius?

Messenger: Ay:

But soon that war had end, and the time's state
Made friends of them, joining their force 'gainst Caesar;
Whose better issue in the war, from Italy,
Upon the first encounter, drave them.

MARK ANTONY: Well, what worst?

Messenger: The nature of bad news infects the teller.

MARK ANTONY: When it concerns the fool or coward. On:
Things that are past are done with me. 'Tis thus:
Who tells me true, though in his tale lie death,
I hear him as he flatter'd.

Messenger: Labienus--

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--

MARK ANTONY: Antony, thou wouldst say,--

Messenger: O, my lord!

MARK ANTONY: Speak to me home, mince not the general
tongue:

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

Messenger: At your noble pleasure.

Exit

MARK ANTONY: From Sicyon, ho, the news! Speak there!

First Attendant: The man from Sicyon,--is there such an
one?

Second Attendant: He stays upon your will.

MARK ANTONY: Let him appear.

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

Enter another Messenger

What are you?

Second Messenger: Fulvia thy wife is dead.

MARK ANTONY: Where died she?

Second Messenger: In Sicyon:

Her length of sickness, with what else more serious
Importeth thee to know, this bears.

Gives a letter

MARK ANTONY: Forbear me.

Exit Second Messenger

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

What our contempt 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:
Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,
My idleness doth hatch. How now! Enobarbus!

Re-enter DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: What's your pleasure, sir?

MARK ANTONY: I must with haste from hence.

DOMITIUS 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.

MARK ANTONY: I must be gone.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Under a compelling occasion, let
women die; it were

pity to cast them away for nothing; though, 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.

MARK ANTONY: She is cunning past man's thought.

Exit ALEXAS

DOMITIUS 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
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.

MARK ANTONY: Would I had never seen her.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: O, sir, you had then left unseen a
wonderful piece

of work; which not to have been blest withal would
have discredited your travel.

MARK ANTONY: Fulvia is dead.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Sir?

MARK ANTONY: Fulvia is dead.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Fulvia!

MARK ANTONY: Dead.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice. When

it pleaseth their deities to take the wife of a man from him, it shows to man the tailors of the earth; comforting therein, that when old robes are worn out, there are members to make new. If there were no more women but Fulvia, then had you indeed a cut, and the case to be lamented: this grief is crowned with consolation; your old smock brings forth a new petticoat: and indeed the tears live in an onion that should water this sorrow.

MARK ANTONY: The business she hath broached in the state

Cannot endure my absence.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: And the business you have broached here cannot be without you; especially that of Cleopatra's, which wholly depends on your abode.

MARK ANTONY: No more light answers. Let our officers Have notice what we purpose. I shall break The cause of our expedience to the queen, And get her leave to part. For not alone The death of Fulvia, with more urgent touches, Do strongly speak to us; but the letters too Of many our contriving friends in Rome Petition us at home: Sextus Pompeius Hath given the dare to Caesar, and commands The empire of the sea: our slippery people, Whose love is never link'd to the deserver Till his deserts are past, begin to throw Pompey the Great and all his dignities

Upon his son; who, high in name and power,
Higher than both in blood and life, stands up
For the main soldier: whose quality, going on,
The sides o' the world may danger: much is breeding,
Which, like the courser's hair, hath yet but life,
And not a serpent's poison. Say, our pleasure,
To such whose place is under us, requires
Our quick remove from hence.
DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS: I shall do't.
Exeunt

Scene 3

The same. Another room.

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMIAN, IRAS, and ALEXAS

CLEOPATRA: Where is he?

CHARMIAN: I did not see him since.

CLEOPATRA: See where he is, who's with him, what he
does:

I did not send you: if you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick: quick, and return.

Exit ALEXAS

CHARMIAN: Madam, methinks, if you did love him dearly,
You do not hold the method to enforce
The like from him.

CLEOPATRA: What should I do, I do not?

CHARMIAN: In each thing give him way, cross him nothing.

CLEOPATRA: Thou teachest like a fool; the way to lose him.