

# Antony and Cleopatra

## 1.2

*Enter Enobarbus, a Soothsayer, Charmian, Iras,  
Mardian the eunuch, Alexas, [and attendants]*

**CHARMIAN** Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most anything  
Alexas, almost most absolute Alexas, where's the  
soothsayer that you praised so to th' Queen?  
O that I knew this husband, which you say  
Must charge his horns with garlands!

**ALEXAS** Soothsayer!

5

**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** *(to Charmian)* Show him your hand. 10

**ENOBARBUS** *(calling)* Bring in the banquet quickly,  
Wine enough Cleopatra's health to drink.

*[Enter servants with food and wine, and exeunt]*

**CHARMIAN** *(to Soothsayer)* Good sir, give me good fortune.

**SOOTHSAYER** I make not, but foresee.

**CHARMIAN**

Pray then, foresee me one.

**SOOTHSAYER** You shall be yet 15

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. 20

**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.

25

**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.

30

**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.

35

**ALEXAS** You think none but your sheets are privy to your  
wishes.

**CHARMIAN** (*to the Soothsayer*) Nay, come, tell Iras hers.

**ALEXAS** We'll know all our fortunes.

**ENOBARBUS** Mine, and most of our fortunes, tonight shall  
be drunk to bed.

40

**IRAS** (*showing her hand to the Soothsayer*) 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.

45

**CHARMIAN** Nay, if an oily palm be not a fruitful prognos-  
tication, I cannot scratch mine ear. (*To the Soothsayer*)  
Prithee, tell her but a workaday fortune.

**SOOTHSAYER** Your fortunes are alike.

**IRAS**

But how, but how? Give me particulars.

50

**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.

55

**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 60  
to his grave, fiftyfold 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 heart-breaking to see a handsome man 65  
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 70  
cuckold, they would make themselves whores but  
they'd do't.

*Enter Cleopatra*

**ENOBARBUS**

Hush, here comes Antony.

**CHARMIAN** Not he, the Queen.

**CLEOPATRA**

Saw you my lord?

**ENOBARBUS** No, lady.

**CLEOPATRA** Was he not here?

**CHARMIAN** No, madam. 75

**CLEOPATRA**

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

**ENOBARBUS** Madam?

**CLEOPATRA**

Seek him, and bring him hither. Where's Alexas?

**ALEXAS**

Here at your service. My lord approaches. 80

*Enter Antony with a Messenger*

**CLEOPATRA**

We will not look upon him. Go with us.

*Exeunt all but Antony and the Messenger*

**MESSENGER**

Fulvia thy wife first came into the field.

**ANTONY** Against my brother Lucius?

**MESSENGER**

Ay, but soon that war had end, and the time's state  
Made friends of them, jointing their force 'gainst

Caesar,  
Whose better issue in the war from Italy  
Upon the first encounter drave them.

85

**ANTONY**

Well, what worst?

**MESSENGER**

The nature of bad news infects the teller.

**ANTONY**

When it concerns the fool or coward. On.  
Things that are past are done. With me 'tis thus: 90  
Who tells me true, though in his tale lie death,  
I hear him as he flattered.

**MESSENGER**

Labienus±±

This is stiff news±±hath with his Parthian force  
Extended Asia; from Euphrates  
His conquering banner shook, from Syria 95  
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 100  
With such full licence as both truth and malice  
Have power to utter. O, then we bring forth weeds  
When our quick winds lie still, and our ills told us  
Is as our earring. Fare thee well a while.

**MESSENGER** At your noble pleasure. 105

*Exit Messenger*

*Enter another Messenger*

**ANTONY**

From Sicyon, ho, the news? Speak there.

**[SECOND MESSENGER]**

The man from Sicyon±±

**[ANTONY]**

Is there such a one?

**[SECOND MESSENGER]**

He stays upon your will.

**ANTONY**

Let him appear.

*Exit Second Messenger*

These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,

Or lose myself in dotage.

*Enter another Messenger with a letter*

What are you?

110

**[THIRD MESSENGER]**

Fulvia thy wife is dead.

**ANTONY**

Where died she?

**THIRD MESSENGER** In Sicyon.

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

*He gives Antony the letter*

**ANTONY**

Forbear me.

*[Exit Third Messenger]*

There's a great spirit gone. Thus did I desire it. 115

What our contempts doth often hurl from us

We wish it ours again. The present pleasure,

By revolution low'ring, does become

The opposite of itself. She's good being gone;

The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on. 120

I must from this enchanting queen break off.

Ten thousand harms more than the ills I know

My idleness doth hatch. How now, Enobarbus!

*[Enter Enobarbus]*

**ENOBARBUS**

What's your pleasure, sir?

**ANTONY**

I must with haste from hence.

**ENOBARBUS** Why, then we kill all our women. We see 125

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 130

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 135

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 140  
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.

**ANTONY** Would I had never seen her!

**ENOBARBUS** O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful 145  
piece of work, which not to have been blessed withal  
would have discredited your travel.

**ANTONY** Fulvia is dead.

**ENOBARBUS** Sir.

**ANTONY** Fulvia is dead. 150

**ENOBARBUS** Fulvia?

**ANTONY** Dead.

**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; 155  
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 consola-  
tion; your old smock brings forth a new petticoat, and 160  
indeed the tears live in an onion that should water this  
sorrow.

**ANTONY**

The business she hath broacheÁd in the state  
Cannot endure my absence.

**ENOBARBUS** And the business you have broached here 165  
cannot be without you, especially that of Cleopatra's,  
which wholly depends on your abode.

**ANTONY**

No more light answers. Let our officers  
Have notice what we purpose. I shall break  
The cause of our expedience to the Queen, 170  
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 175  
Hath given the dare to Caesar and commands

The empire of the sea. Our slippery people,  
Whose love is never linked to the deserver  
Till his deserts are past, begin to throw  
Pompey the Great and all his dignities 180  
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'th' world may danger. Much is breeding  
Which, like the courser's hair, hath yet but life, 185  
And not a serpent's poison. Say our pleasure,  
To such whose place is under us, requires  
Our quick remove from hence.

**ENOBARBUS**

I shall do't.

*Exeunt severally*