

Titus Andronicus

3.1

Enter the Judges, Tribunes, and Senators with Titus' two sons, Martius and Quintus, bound, passing [over] the stage to the place of execution, and Titus going before, pleading

TITUS

Hear me, grave fathers; noble Tribunes, stay.
For pity of mine age, whose youth was spent
In dangerous wars whilst you securely slept;
For all my blood in Rome's great quarrel shed;
For all the frosty nights that I have watched, 5
And for these bitter tears which now you see
Filling the age's wrinkles in my cheeks,
Be pitiful to my condemn'd sons,
Whose souls is not corrupted as 'tis thought.
For two-and-twenty sons I never wept, 10
Because they died in honour's lofty bed.

Andronicus lieth down, and the Judges pass by him

For these two, Tribunes, in the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears.
Let my tears stanch the earth's dry appetite;
My sons' sweet blood will make it shame and blush. 15

[Exeunt all but Titus]

O earth, I will befriend thee more with rain
That shall distil from these two ancient ruins
Than youthful April shall with all his showers.
In summer's drought I'll drop upon thee still.
In winter with warm tears I'll melt the snow 20
And keep eternal springtime on thy face,
So thou refuse to drink my dear sons' blood.

Enter Lucius with his weapon drawn

O reverend Tribunes, O gentle, aged men,
Unbind my sons, reverse the doom of death,
And let me say, that never wept before, 25
My tears are now prevailing orators!

LUCIUS

O noble father, you lament in vain.

The Tribunes hear you not. No man is by,
And you recount your sorrows to a stone.

TITUS

Ah Lucius, for thy brothers let me plead. 30
Grave Tribunes, once more I entreat of you±±

LUCIUS

My gracious lord, no tribune hears you speak.

TITUS

Why, 'tis no matter, man. If they did hear,
They would not mark me; if they did mark,
They would not pity me; yet plead I must. 35
Therefore I tell my sorrows to the stones,
Who, though they cannot answer my distress,
Yet in some sort they are better than the Tribunes
For that they will not intercept my tale.
When I do weep they humbly at my feet 40
Receive my tears and seem to weep with me,
And were they but attireÁd in grave weeds
Rome could afford no tribunes like to these.
A stone is soft as wax, tribunes more hard than
stones.

A stone is silent and offendeth not, 45
And tribunes with their tongues doom men to death.
But wherefore stand'st thou with thy weapon drawn?

LUCIUS

To rescue my two brothers from their death,
For which attempt the Judges have pronounced
My everlasting doom of banishment. 50

TITUS *[rising]*

O happy man, they have befriended thee!
Why, foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive
That Rome is but a wilderness of tigers?
Tigers must prey, and Rome affords no prey
But me and mine. How happy art thou then 55
From these devourers to be banisheÁd!
But who comes with our brother Marcus here?

Enter Marcus with Lavinia

MARCUS

Titus, prepare thy ageÁd eyes to weep,
Or if not so, thy noble heart to break.

I bring consuming sorrow to thine age. 60

TITUS
Will it consume me? Let me see it then.

MARCUS This was thy daughter.

TITUS Why, Marcus, so she is.

LUCIUS (*falling on his knees*) Ay me, this object kills me.

TITUS
Faint-hearted boy, arise and look upon her. 65
[Lucius rises]
Speak, Lavinia, what accursed hand
Hath made thee handless in thy father's sight?
What fool hath added water to the sea,
Or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy?
My grief was at the height before thou cam'st, 70
And now like Nilus it disdaineth bounds.
Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too,
For they have fought for Rome, and all in vain;
And they have nursed this woe in feeding life;
In bootless prayer have they been held up, 75
And they have served me to effectless use.
Now all the service I require of them
Is that the one will help to cut the other.
'Tis well, Lavinia, that thou hast no hands,
For hands to do Rome service is but vain. 80

LUCIUS
Speak, gentle sister, who hath martyred thee.

MARCUS
O, that delightful engine of her thoughts,
That blabbed them with such pleasing eloquence,
Is torn from forth that pretty hollow cage
Where, like a sweet melodious bird, it sung 85
Sweet varied notes, enchanting every ear.

LUCIUS
O, say thou for her, who hath done this deed?

MARCUS
O, thus I found her, straying in the park,
Seeking to hide herself, as doth the deer
That hath received some unrecuring wound. 90

TITUS
It was my dear, and he that wounded her
Hath hurt me more than had he killed me dead;

For now I stand as one upon a rock
 Environed with a wilderness of sea,
 Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave, 95
 Expecting ever when some envious surge
 Will in his brinish bowels swallow him.
 This way to death my wretched sons are gone.
 Here stands my other son, a banished man,
 And here my brother, weeping at my woes. 100
 But that which gives my soul the greatest spurn
 Is dear Lavinia, dearer than my soul.
 Had I but seen thy picture in this plight
 It would have madded me. What shall I do
 Now I behold thy lively body so? 105
 Thou hast no hands to wipe away thy tears,
 Nor tongue to tell me who hath martyred thee.
 Thy husband he is dead, and for his death
 Thy brothers are condemned and dead by this.
 Look, Marcus, ah, son Lucius, look on her! 110
 When I did name her brothers, then fresh tears
 Stood on her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
 Upon a gathered lily almost withereÁd.

MARCUS

Perchance she weeps because they killed her
 husband;
 Perchance because she knows them innocent. 115

TITUS

If they did kill thy husband, then be joyful,
 Because the law hath ta'en revenge on them.
 No, no, they would not do so foul a deed;
 Witness the sorrow that their sister makes.
 Gentle Lavinia, let me kiss thy lips; 120
 Or make some sign how I may do thee ease.
 Shall thy good uncle, and thy brother Lucius,
 And thou, and I, sit round about some fountain,
 Looking all downwards to behold our cheeks
 How they are stained, like meadows yet not dry 125
 With miry slime left on them by a flood?
 And in the fountain shall we gaze so long
 Till the fresh taste be taken from that clearness,
 And made a brine pit with our bitter tears?

Or shall we cut away our hands like thine? 130
Or shall we bite our tongues, and in dumb shows
Pass the remainder of our hateful days?
What shall we do? Let us that have our tongues
Plot some device of further misery,
To make us wondered at in time to come. 135

LUCIUS

Sweet father, cease your tears, for at your grief
See how my wretched sister sobs and weeps.

MARCUS

Patience, dear niece. Good Titus, dry thine eyes.

TITUS

Ah, Marcus, Marcus, brother, well I wot
Thy napkin cannot drink a tear of mine, 140
For thou, poor man, hast drowned it with thine own.

LUCIUS

Ah, my Lavinia, I will wipe thy cheeks.

TITUS

Mark, Marcus, mark. I understand her signs.
Had she a tongue to speak, now would she say
That to her brother which I said to thee. 145
His napkin with his true tears all bewet
Can do no service on her sorrowful cheeks.
O, what a sympathy of woe is this±±
As far from help as limbo is from bliss.

Enter Aaron the Moor, alone

AARON

Titus Andronicus, my lord the Emperor 150
Sends thee this word: that, if thou love thy sons,
Let Marcus, Lucius or thyself, old Titus,
Or any one of you, chop off your hand
And send it to the King. He for the same
Will send thee hither both thy sons alive, 155
And that shall be the ransom for their fault.

TITUS

O gracious Emperor! O gentle Aaron,
Did ever raven sing so like a lark
That gives sweet tidings of the sun's uprise?
With all my heart I'll send the Emperor my hand. 160
Good Aaron, wilt thou help to chop it off?

LUCIUS

Stay, father, for that noble hand of thine,
That hath thrown down so many enemies,
Shall not be sent. My hand will serve the turn.
My youth can better spare my blood than you, 165
And therefore mine shall save my brothers' lives.

MARCUS

Which of your hands hath not defended Rome
And reared aloft the bloody battleaxe,
Writing destruction on the enemy's castle?
O, none of both but are of high desert. 170
My hand hath been but idle; let it serve
To ransom my two nephews from their death,
Then have I kept it to a worthy end.

AARON

Nay, come, agree whose hand shall go along,
For fear they die before their pardon come. 175

MARCUS

My hand shall go.

LUCIUS By heaven it shall not go.

TITUS

Sirs, strive no more. Such withered herbs as these
Are meet for plucking up, and therefore mine.

LUCIUS

Sweet father, if I shall be thought thy son,
Let me redeem my brothers both from death. 180

MARCUS

And for our father's sake and mother's care,
Now let me show a brother's love to thee.

TITUS

Agree between you. I will spare my hand.

LUCIUS

Then I'll go fetch an axe.

MARCUS But I will use the axe.

Exeunt Lucius and Marcus

TITUS

Come hither, Aaron. I'll deceive them both. 185
Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine.

AARON (*aside*)

If that be called deceit, I will be honest
And never whilst I live deceive men so.
But I'll deceive you in another sort,

And that you'll say ere half an hour pass. 190

He cuts off Titus' hand.

Enter Lucius and Marcus again

TITUS

Now stay your strife. What shall be is dispatched.

Good Aaron, give his majesty my hand.

Tell him it was a hand that warded him
From thousand dangers; bid him bury it.

More hath it merited; that let it have. 195

As for my sons, say I account of them

As jewels purchased at an easy price,

And yet dear too, because I bought mine own.

AARON

I go, Andronicus; and for thy hand

Look by and by to have thy sons with thee. 200

(Aside) Their heads, I mean. O, how this villainy

Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it!

Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace:

Aaron will have his soul black like his face.

Exit

TITUS

O, here I lift this one hand up to heaven 205

And bow this feeble ruin to the earth.

He kneels

If any power pities wretched tears,

To that I call. *(To Lavinia, who kneels)* What, wouldst
thou kneel with me?

Do then, dear heart; for heaven shall hear our prayers,

Or with our sighs we'll breathe the welkin dim 210

And stain the sun with fog, as sometime clouds

When they do hug him in their melting bosoms.

MARCUS

O brother, speak with possibility,

And do not break into these deep extremes.

TITUS

Is not my sorrows deep, having no bottom? 215

Then be my passions bottomless with them.

MARCUS

But yet let reason govern thy lament.

TITUS

If there were reason for these miseries,

Then into limits could I bind my woes.
When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth
o'erflow? 220

If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad,
Threat'ning the welkin with his big-swoll'n face?
And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?
I am the sea. Hark how her sighs doth blow.
She is the weeping welkin, I the earth. 225
Then must my sea be moveÁd with her sighs,
Then must my earth with her continual tears
Become a deluge overflowed and drowned,
Forwhy my bowels cannot hide her woes,
But like a drunkard must I vomit them. 230
Then give me leave, for losers will have leave
To ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

Enter a Messenger with two heads and a hand

MESSENGER

Worthy Andronicus, ill art thou repaid
For that good hand thou sent'st the Emperor.
Here are the heads of thy two noble sons, 235
And here's thy hand in scorn to thee sent back±±
Thy grief their sports, thy resolution mocked,
That woe is me to think upon thy woes
More than remembrance of my father's death.

[He sets down the heads and hand. Exit]

MARCUS

Now let hot Etna cool in Sicily, 240
And be my heart an ever-burning hell.
These miseries are more than may be borne.
To weep with them that weep doth ease some deal,
But sorrow flouted at is double death.

LUCIUS

Ah, that this sight should make so deep a wound 245
And yet detested life not shrink thereat±±
That ever death should let life bear his name
Where life hath no more interest but to breathe!

Lavinia kisses Titus

MARCUS

Alas, poor heart, that kiss is comfortless
As frozen water to a starveÁd snake. 250

TITUS

When will this fearful slumber have an end?

MARCUS

Now farewell, flatt'ry; die, Andronicus.

Thou dost not slumber. See thy two sons' heads,

Thy warlike hand, thy mangled daughter here,

Thy other banished son with this dear sight 255

Struck pale and bloodless, and thy brother, I,

Even like a stony image, cold and numb.

Ah, now no more will I control thy griefs.

Rend off thy silver hair, thy other hand

Gnawing with thy teeth, and be this dismal sight 260

The closing up of our most wretched eyes.

Now is a time to storm. Why art thou still?

TITUS Ha, ha, ha!

MARCUS

Why dost thou laugh? It fits not with this hour.

TITUS

Why, I have not another tear to shed. 265

Besides, this sorrow is an enemy,

And would usurp upon my wat'ry eyes

And make them blind with tributary tears.

Then which way shall I find Revenge's cave?±±

For these two heads do seem to speak to me 270

And threat me I shall never come to bliss

Till all these mischiefs be returned again

Even in their throats that hath committed them.

Come, let me see what task I have to do.

[He and Lavinia rise]

You heavy people, circle me about, 275

That I may turn me to each one of you

And swear unto my soul to right your wrongs.

*Marcus, Lucius, and Lavinia circle Titus. He
pledges them*

The vow is made. Come, brother, take a head,

And in this hand the other will I bear.

And Lavinia, thou shalt be employed. 280

Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thine arms.

As for thee, boy, go get thee from my sight.

Thou art an exile and thou must not stay.

Hie to the Goths, and raise an army there,
And if ye love me, as I think you do, 285
Let's kiss and part, for we have much to do.

They kiss. Exeunt all but Lucius

LUCIUS

Farewell, Andronicus, my noble father,
The woefull'st man that ever lived in Rome.
Farewell, proud Rome, till Lucius come again;
He loves his pledges dearer than his life. 290

Farewell, Lavinia, my noble sister:
O, would thou wert as thou tofore hast been!
But now nor Lucius nor Lavinia lives
But in oblivion and hateful griefs.
If Lucius live he will requite your wrongs 295
And make proud Saturnine and his empress
Beg at the gates like Tarquin and his queen.
Now will I to the Goths and raise a power,
To be revenged on Rome and Saturnine.

Exit