

Titus Andronicus

4.4

Enter Saturninus, the Emperor, and Tamora, the Empress, and Chiron and Demetrius, her two sons, and others. The Emperor brings the arrows in his hand that Titus shot at him

SATURNINUS

Why, lords, what wrongs are these! Was ever seen
An emperor in Rome thus overborne,
Troubled, confronted thus, and for the extent
Of egall justice used in such contempt?
My lords, you know, as know the mightful gods, 5
However these disturbers of our peace
Buzz in the people's ears, there naught hath passed
But even with law against the wilful sons
Of old Andronicus. And what an if
His sorrows have so overwhelmed his wits? 10
Shall we be thus afflicted in his wrecks,
His fits, his frenzy, and his bitterness?
And now he writes to heaven for his redress.
See, here's `to Jove' and this `to Mercury',
This `to Apollo', this `to the god of war'±± 15
Sweet scrolls to fly about the streets of Rome!
What's this but libelling against the Senate
And blazoning our injustice everywhere?
A goodly humour, is it not, my lords?±±
As who would say, in Rome no justice were. 20
But, if I live, his feigneÁd ecstasies
Shall be no shelter to these outrages,
But he and his shall know that justice lives
In Saturninus' health, whom if he sleep
He'll so awake as he in fury shall 25
Cut off the proud'st conspirator that lives.

TAMORA

My gracious lord, my lovely Saturnine,
Lord of my life, commander of my thoughts,
Calm thee, and bear the faults of Titus' age,
Th'effects of sorrow for his valiant sons 30

Whose loss hath pierced him deep and scarred his
heart;
And rather comfort his distresseÁd plight
Than prosecute the meanest or the best
For these contempts. (*Aside*) Why, thus it shall become
High-witted Tamora to gloze with all. 35
But, Titus, I have touched thee to the quick.
Thy life blood out if Aaron now be wise,
Then is all safe, the anchor in the port.

Enter Clown

How now, good fellow, wouldst thou speak with us?
CLOWN Yea, forsooth, an your mistress-ship be Emperial. 40
TAMORA Empress I am, but yonder sits the Emperor.
CLOWN 'Tis he. God and Saint Stephen give you good-
e'en. I have brought you a letter and a couple of
pigeons here.

Saturninus reads the letter

SATURNINUS (*to an attendant*)
Go, take him away, and hang him presently. 45
CLOWN How much money must I have?
TAMORA Come, sirrah, you must be hanged.
CLOWN Hanged, by' Lady? Then I have brought up a
neck to a fair end.

Exit [with attendant]

SATURNINUS
Despiteful and intolerable wrongs! 50
Shall I endure this monstrous villainy?
I know from whence this same device proceeds.
May this be borne?±±As if his traitorous sons,
That died by law for murder of our brother,
Have by my means been butchered wrongfully! 55
Go, drag the villain hither by the hair.
Nor age nor honour shall shape privilege.
For this proud mock I'll be thy slaughterman,
Sly frantic wretch, that holp'st to make me great
In hope thyself should govern Rome and me. 60

Enter Aemilius, a messenger

SATURNINUS
What news with thee, Aemilius?
AEMILIUS

Arm, my lords! Rome never had more cause.
The Goths have gathered head, and with a power
Of high-resolve And men bent to the spoil
They hither march again under conduct 65
Of Lucius, son to old Andronicus,
Who threats in course of this revenge to do
As much as ever Coriolanus did.

SATURNINUS

Is warlike Lucius general of the Goths?
These tidings nip me, and I hang the head, 70
As flowers with frost, or grass beat down with storms.
Ay, now begins our sorrows to approach.
'Tis he the common people love so much.
Myself hath often heard them say,
When I have walked like a private man, 75
That Lucius' banishment was wrongfully,
And they have wished that Lucius were their
emperor.

TAMORA

Why should you fear? Is not your city strong?

SATURNINUS

Ay, but the citizens favour Lucius,
And will revolt from me to succour him. 80

TAMORA

King, be thy thoughts imperious like thy name.
Is the sun dimmed, that gnats do fly in it?
The eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby,
Knowing that with the shadow of his wings 85
He can at pleasure stint their melody.
Even so mayst thou the giddy men of Rome.
Then cheer thy spirit; for know thou, Emperor,
I will enchant the old Andronicus
With words more sweet and yet more dangerous 90
Than baits to fish or honey-stalks to sheep
Whenas the one is wounded with the bait,
The other rotted with delicious feed.

SATURNINUS

But he will not entreat his son for us.

TAMORA

If Tamora entreat him, then he will, 95

For I can smooth and fill his ageÁd ears
With golden promises that, were his heart
Almost impregnable, his old ears deaf,
Yet should both ear and heart obey my tongue.
(To Aemilius) Go thou before to be our ambassador. 100
Say that the Emperor requests a parley
Of warlike Lucius, and appoint the meeting
Even at his father's house, the old Andronicus.

SATURNINUS

Aemilius, do this message honourably,
And if he stand on hostage for his safety, 105
Bid him demand what pledge will please him best.

AEMILIUS

Your bidding shall I do effectually.
Exit

TAMORA

Now will I to that old Andronicus,
And temper him with all the art I have
To pluck proud Lucius from the warlike Goths. 110
And now, sweet Emperor, be blithe again,
And bury all thy fear in my devices.

SATURNINUS

Then go incessantly, and plead to him.
Exeunt severally