

Timon of Athens

1.1

*Enter Poet [at one door], Painter carrying a picture
[at another door], [followed by] Jeweller,
Merchant, and Mercer, at several doors*

POET

Good day, sir.

PAINTER I am glad you're well.

POET

I have not seen you long. How goes the world?

PAINTER

It wears, sir, as it grows.

POET

Ay, that's well known.

But what particular rarity, what strange,
Which manifold record not matches?±±See, 5
Magic of bounty, all these spirits thy power
Hath conjured to attend.

*[Merchant and Jeweller meet. Mercer passes over
the stage, and exits]*

I know the merchant.

PAINTER

I know them both. Th'other's a jeweller.

MERCHANT *(to Jeweller)*

O, 'tis a worthy lord!

JEWELLER

Nay, that's most fixed.

MERCHANT

A most incomparable man, breathed, as it were, 10
To an untirable and continue goodness.
He passes.

JEWELLER *(showing a jewel)* I have a jewel here.

MERCHANT

O, pray, let's see't. For the Lord Timon, sir?

JEWELLER

If he will touch the estimate. But for that±±

POET *(to himself)*

`When we for recompense have praised the vile, 15
It stains the glory in that happy verse
Which aptly sings the good.'

MERCHANT *(to Jeweller)* 'Tis a good form.

JEWELLER

And rich. Here is a water, look ye.

PAINTER *(to Poet)*

You are rapt, sir, in some work, some dedication
To the great lord.

POET A thing slipped idly from me. 20

Our poesy is as a gum which oozes
From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i'th' flint
Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame
Provokes itself, and like the current flies
Each bound it chafes. What have you there? 25

PAINTER

A picture, sir. When comes your book forth?

POET

Upon the heels of my presentment, sir.
Let's see your piece.

PAINTER *(showing the picture)* 'Tis a good piece.

POET

So 'tis. This comes off well and excellent.

PAINTER

Indifferent.

POET Admirable. How this grace 30

Speaks his own standing! What a mental power
This eye shoots forth! How big imagination
Moves in this lip! To th' dumbness of the gesture
One might interpret.

PAINTER

It is a pretty mocking of the life. 35
Here is a touch; is't good?

POET I will say of it,

It tutors nature. Artificial strife
Lives in these touches livelier than life.

Enter certain Senators

PAINTER How this lord is followed!

POET

The senators of Athens. Happy man! 40

PAINTER Look, more.

[The Senators pass over the stage, and exeunt]

POET

You see this confluence, this great flood of visitors.
I have in this rough work shaped out a man

Whom this beneath world doth embrace and hug
With amplest entertainment. My free drift 45
Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of tax. No levelled malice
Infects one comma in the course I hold,
But flies an eagle flight, bold and forth on,
Leaving no tract behind. 50

PAINTER How shall I understand you?

POET I will unbolt to you.
You see how all conditions, how all minds,
As well of glib and slipp'ry creatures as
Of grave and austere quality, tender down 55
Their service to Lord Timon. His large fortune,
Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,
Subdues and properties to his love and tendance
All sorts of hearts; yea, from the glass-faced flatterer
To Apemantus, that few things loves better 60
Than to abhor himself; even he drops down
The knee before him, and returns in peace,
Most rich in Timon's nod.

PAINTER I saw them speak together.

POET
Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill
Feigned Fortune to be throned. The base o'th' mount 65
Is ranked with all deserts, all kind of natures
That labour on the bosom of this sphere
To propagate their states. Amongst them all
Whose eyes are on this sovereign lady fixed
One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame, 70
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her,
Whose present grace to present slaves and servants
Translates his rivals.

PAINTER 'Tis conceived to scope.
This throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks,
With one man beckoned from the rest below, 75
Bowing his head against the steepy mount
To climb his happiness, would be well expressed
In our condition.

POET Nay, sir, but hear me on.
All those which were his fellows but of late,

Some better than his value, on the moment 80
Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear,
Make sacred even his stirrup, and through him
Drink the free air.

PAINTER Ay, marry, what of these?

POET

When Fortune in her shift and change of mood 85
Spurns down her late belov'd, all his dependants,
Which laboured after him to the mountain's top
Even on their knees and hands, let him fall down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot.

PAINTER 'Tis common. 90

A thousand moral paintings I can show
That shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune's
More pregnantly than words. Yet you do well
To show Lord Timon that mean eyes have seen
The foot above the head. 95

Trumpets sound. Enter Timon [wearing a rich jewel], with a Messenger from Ventidius; Lucilius [and other Servants] attending. Timon addresses himself courteously to every suitor, then speaks to the Messenger

TIMON Imprisoned is he, say you?

MESSENGER

Ay, my good lord. Five talents is his debt,
His means most short, his creditors most strait.
Your honourable letter he desires
To those have shut him up, which failing, 100
Periods his comfort.

TIMON Noble Ventidius! Well,
I am not of that feather to shake off
My friend when he must need me. I do know him
A gentleman that well deserves a help,
Which he shall have. I'll pay the debt and free him. 105

MESSENGER Your lordship ever binds him.

TIMON

Commend me to him. I will send his ransom;
And, being enfranchised, bid him come to me.
'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,

But to support him after. Fare you well. 110
MESSENGER All happiness to your honour.
Exit
Enter an Old Athenian
OLD ATHENIAN
Lord Timon, hear me speak.
TIMON Freely, good father.
OLD ATHENIAN
Thou hast a servant named Lucilius.
TIMON I have so. What of him?
OLD ATHENIAN
Most noble Timon, call the man before thee. 115
TIMON
Attends he here or no? Lucilius!
LUCILIUS (*coming forward*) Here at your lordship's service.
OLD ATHENIAN
This fellow here, Lord Timon, this thy creature,
By night frequents my house. I am a man
That from my first have been inclined to thrift, 120
And my estate deserves an heir more raised
Than one which holds a trencher.
TIMON Well, what further?
OLD ATHENIAN
One only daughter have I, no kin else
On whom I may confer what I have got.
The maid is fair, o'th' youngest for a bride, 125
And I have bred her at my dearest cost
In qualities of the best. This man of thine
Attempts her love. I prithee, noble lord,
Join with me to forbid him her resort.
Myself have spoke in vain. 130
TIMON The man is honest.
OLD ATHENIAN Therefore he will be, Timon.
His honesty rewards him in itself;
It must not bear my daughter.
TIMON Does she love him? 135
OLD ATHENIAN She is young and apt.
Our own precedent passions do instruct us
What levity's in youth.
TIMON (*to Lucilius*) Love you the maid?
LUCILIUS

Ay, my good lord, and she accepts of it.

OLD ATHENIAN
 If in her marriage my consent be missing, 140
 I call the gods to witness, I will choose
 Mine heir from forth the beggars of the world,
 And dispossess her all.

TIMON How shall she be endowed
 If she be mated with an equal husband?

OLD ATHENIAN
 Three talents on the present; in future, all. 145

TIMON
 This gentleman of mine hath served me long.
 To build his fortune I will strain a little,
 For 'tis a bond in men. Give him thy daughter.
 What you bestow in him I'll counterpoise,
 And make him weigh with her.

OLD ATHENIAN Most noble lord, 150
 Pawn me to this your honour, she is his.

TIMON
 My hand to thee; mine honour on my promise.

LUCILIUS
 Humbly I thank your lordship. Never may
 That state or fortune fall into my keeping
 Which is not owed to you. 155

Exeunt Lucilius and Old Athenian

POET *(presenting a poem to Timon)*
 Vouchsafe my labour, and long live your lordship!

TIMON
 I thank you. You shall hear from me anon.
 Go not away. *(To Painter)* What have you there, my
 friend?

PAINTER
 A piece of painting, which I do beseech
 Your lordship to accept.

TIMON Painting is welcome. 160
 The painting is almost the natural man;
 For since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
 He is but outside; these pencilled figures are
 Even such as they give out. I like your work,
 And you shall find I like it. Wait attendance 165
 Till you hear further from me.

PAINTER

The gods preserve ye!

TIMON

Well fare you, gentleman. Give me your hand.

We must needs dine together. (*To Jeweller*) Sir, your jewel

Hath suffered under praise.

JEWELLER

What, my lord, dispraise?

TIMON

A mere satiety of commendations. 170

If I should pay you for't as 'tis extolled

It would unclew me quite.

JEWELLER

My lord, 'tis rated

As those which sell would give; but you well know

Things of like value differing in the owners

Are prize'd by their masters. Believe't, dear lord, 175

You mend the jewel by the wearing it.

TIMON Well mocked.

MERCHANT

No, my good lord, he speaks the common tongue

Which all men speak with him.

Enter Apemantus

TIMON

Look who comes here.

Will you be chid? 180

JEWELLER We will bear, with your lordship.

MERCHANT He'll spare none.

TIMON

Good morrow to thee, gentle Apemantus.

APEMANTUS

Till I be gentle, stay thou for thy good morrow±±

When thou art Timon's dog, and these knaves honest. 185

TIMON

Why dost thou call them knaves? Thou know'st them
not.

APEMANTUS Are they not Athenians?

TIMON Yes.

APEMANTUS Then I repent not.

JEWELLER You know me, Apemantus? 190

APEMANTUS

Thou know'st I do. I called thee by thy name.

TIMON Thou art proud, Apemantus!

APEMANTUS Of nothing so much as that I am not like
Timon.

TIMON Whither art going? 195

APEMANTUS To knock out an honest Athenian's brains.

TIMON That's a deed thou'lt die for.

APEMANTUS Right, if doing nothing be death by th' law.

TIMON
How likest thou this picture, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS The best for the innocence. 200

TIMON
Wrought he not well that painted it?

APEMANTUS He wrought better that made the painter, and
yet he's but a filthy piece of work.

PAINTER You're a dog.

APEMANTUS Thy mother's of my generation. What's she, 205
if I be a dog?

TIMON Wilt dine with me, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS No, I eat not lords.

TIMON An thou shouldst, thou'dst anger ladies.

APEMANTUS O, they eat lords. So they come by great bellies. 210

TIMON
That's a lascivious apprehension.

APEMANTUS
So thou apprehend'st it; take it for thy labour.

TIMON
How dost thou like this jewel, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS Not so well as plain dealing, which will not
cost a man a doit. 215

TIMON
What dost thou think 'tis worth?

APEMANTUS Not worth my thinking.
How now, poet?

POET How now, philosopher?

APEMANTUS Thou liest.

POET Art not one? 220

APEMANTUS Yes.

POET Then I lie not.

APEMANTUS Art not a poet?

POET Yes.

APEMANTUS Then thou liest. Look in thy last work, where 225
thou hast feigned him a worthy fellow.

POET That's not feigned, he is so.

APEMANTUS Yes, he is worthy of thee, and to pay thee for

thy labour. He that loves to be flattered is worthy o'th'
flatterer. Heavens, that I were a lord! 230

TIMON What wouldst do then, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS E'en as Apemantus does now: hate a lord
with my heart.

TIMON What, thyself?

APEMANTUS Ay. 235

TIMON Wherefore?

APEMANTUS That I had no augury but to be a lord.±±Art
not thou a merchant?

MERCHANT Ay, Apemantus.

APEMANTUS

Traffic confound thee, if the gods will not! 240

MERCHANT If traffic do it, the gods do it.

APEMANTUS

Traffic's thy god, and thy god confound thee!

Trumpet sounds. Enter a Messenger

TIMON What trumpet's that?

MESSENGER

'Tis Alcibiades, and some twenty horse

All of companionship. 245

TIMON *(to Servants)*

Pray entertain them. Give them guide to us.

[Exit one or more Servants]

[To Jeweller] You must needs dine with me.

[To Poet]

Go not you hence

Till I have thanked you. *[To Painter]* When dinner's done

Show me this piece. *[To all]* I am joyful of your sights.

Enter Alcibiades with [his horsemen]

Most welcome, sir! 250

APEMANTUS *[aside]* So, so, there.

Aches contract and starve your supple joints!

That there should be small love 'mongst these sweet
knaves,

And all this courtesy! The strain of man's bred out

Into baboon and monkey. 255

ALCIBIADES *(to Timon)*

Sir, you have saved my longing, and I feed

Most hungrily on your sight.

TIMON Right welcome, sir!
Ere we depart, we'll share a bounteous time
In different pleasures. Pray you, let us in.

Exeunt all but Apemantus

Enter two Lords

FIRST LORD

What time o' day is't, Apemantus? 260

APEMANTUS

Time to be honest.

FIRST LORD That time serves still.

APEMANTUS

The most accursed thou, that still omitt'st it.

SECOND LORD

Thou art going to Lord Timon's feast?

APEMANTUS

Ay, to see meat fill knaves, and wine heat fools.

SECOND LORD Fare thee well, fare thee well. 265

APEMANTUS

Thou art a fool to bid me farewell twice.

SECOND LORD Why, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS Shouldst have kept one to thyself, for I mean
to give thee none.

FIRST LORD Hang thyself! 270

APEMANTUS No, I will do nothing at thy bidding. Make
thy requests to thy friend.

SECOND LORD Away, unpeaceable dog, or I'll spurn thee
hence.

APEMANTUS I will fly, like a dog, the heels o'th' ass. 275

Exit

FIRST LORD

He's opposite to humanity. Come, shall we in,
And taste Lord Timon's bounty? He outgoes
The very heart of kindness.

SECOND LORD

He pours it out. Plutus the god of gold
Is but his steward; no meed but he repays 280
Sevenfold above itself; no gift to him
But breeds the giver a return exceeding
All use of quittance.

FIRST LORD The noblest mind he carries
That ever governed man.

SECOND LORD

Long may he live in fortunes! Shall we in?

285

[FIRST LORD] I'll keep you company.

Exeunt