

Pericles, Prince of Tyre

Sc.2

Enter Pericles, distempered, with his lords

PERICLES

Let none disturb us.

Exeunt lords

Why should this change of
thoughts,

The sad companion, dull-eyed melancholy,
Be my so used a guest as not an hour
In the day's glorious walk or peaceful night,
The tomb where grief should sleep, can breed me
quiet?

5

Here pleasures court mine eyes, and mine eyes shun
them,

And danger, which I feared, 's at Antioch,
Whose arm seems far too short to hit me here.

Yet neither pleasure's art can joy my spirits,
Nor yet care's author's distance comfort me. 10

Then it is thus: the passions of the mind,
That have their first conception by misdread,
Have after-nourishment and life by care,
And what was first but fear what might be done
Grows elder now, and cares it be not done. 15

And so with me. The great Antiochus,
'Gainst whom I am too little to contend,
Since he's so great can make his will his act,
Will think me speaking though I swear to silence,
Nor boots it me to say I honour him 20
If he suspect I may dishonour him.

And what may make him blush in being known,
He'll stop the course by which it might be known.
With hostile forces he'll o'erspread the land,
And with th'ostent of war will look so huge 25
Amazement shall drive courage from the state,
Our men be vanquished ere they do resist,
And subjects punished that ne'er thought offence,
Which care of them, not pity of myself,

Who am no more but as the tops of trees
Which fence the roots they grow by and defend them,
Makes both my body pine and soul to languish,
And punish that before that he would punish.

30

*Enter all the Lords, among them old Helicanus, to
Pericles*

FIRST LORD

Joy and all comfort in your sacred breast!

SECOND LORD

And keep your mind peaceful and comfortable. 35

HELICANUS

Peace, peace, and give experience tongue.
(*To Pericles*) You do not well so to abuse yourself,
To waste your body here with pining sorrow,
Upon whose safety doth depend the lives
And the prosperity of a whole kingdom. 40
'Tis ill in you to do it, and no less
Ill in your council not to contradict it.
They do abuse the King that flatter him,
For flatt'ry is the bellows blows up sin;
The thing the which is flattered, but a spark, 45
To which that wind gives heat and stronger glowing;
Whereas reproof, obedient and in order,
Fits kings as they are men, for they may err.
When Signor Sooth here does proclaim a peace
He flatters you, makes war upon your life. 50

[He kneels]

Prince, pardon me, or strike me if you please.
I cannot be much lower than my knees.

PERICLES

All leave us else; but let your cares o'erlook
What shipping and what lading's in our haven,
And then return to us.

Exeunt Lords

Helicane, thou

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Hast moveÁd us. What seest thou in our looks?

HELICANUS An angry brow, dread lord.

PERICLES

If there be such a dart in princes' frowns,

How durst thy tongue move anger to our brows?

HELICANUS

How dares the plants look up to heav'n from whence
They have their nourishment?

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PERICLES

Thou knowest I have pow'r to take thy life from thee.

HELICANUS

I have ground the axe myself; do you but strike the
blow.

PERICLES *[lifting him up]*

Rise, prithee, rise. Sit down. Thou art no flatterer,
I thank thee for it, and the heav'ns forbid
That kings should let their ears hear their faults hid.
Fit counsellor and servant for a prince,
Who by thy wisdom mak'st a prince thy servant,
What wouldst thou have me do?

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HELICANUS

To bear with patience

Such griefs as you do lay upon yourself.

70

PERICLES

Thou speak'st like a physician, Helicanus,
That ministers a potion unto me
That thou wouldst tremble to receive thyself.
Attend me, then. I went to Antioch,
Where, as thou know'st, against the face of death
I sought the purchase of a glorious beauty
From whence an issue I might propagate,
As children are heav'n's blessings: to parents,
objects;
Are arms to princes, and bring joys to subjects.
Her face was to mine eye beyond all wonder,
The rest±±hark in thine ear±±as black as incest,
Which by my knowledge found, the sinful father
Seemed not to strike, but smooth. But thou know'st
this,
'Tis time to fear when tyrants seems to kiss;
Which fear so grew in me I hither fled
Under the covering of careful night,
Who seemed my good protector, and being here
Bethought me what was past, what might succeed.
I knew him tyrannous, and tyrants' fears

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Decrease not, but grow faster than the years. 90
And should he doubt±±as doubt no doubt he doth±±
That I should open to the list'ning air
How many worthy princes' bloods were shed
To keep his bed of blackness unlaid ope,
To lop that doubt he'll fill this land with arms, 95
And make pretence of wrong that I have done him,
When all for mine±±if I may call±±offence
Must feel war's blow, who spares not innocence;
Which love to all, of which thyself art one,
Who now reprov'd'st me for't±±

HELICANUS

Alas, sir.

100

PERICLES

Drew sleep out of mine eyes, blood from my cheeks,
Musings into my mind, with thousand doubts,
How I might stop this tempest ere it came,
And, finding little comfort to relieve them,
I thought it princely charity to grieve them. 105

HELICANUS

Well, my lord, since you have giv'n me leave to speak,
Freely will I speak. Antiochus you fear,
And justly too, I think, you fear the tyrant,
Who either by public war or private treason
Will take away your life. 110
Therefore, my lord, go travel for a while,
Till that his rage and anger be forgot,
Or destinies do cut his thread of life.
Your rule direct to any; if to me,
Day serves not light more faithful than I'll be. 115

PERICLES

I do not doubt thy faith,
But should he in my absence wrong thy liberties?

HELICANUS

We'll mingle our bloods together in the earth
From whence we had our being and our birth.

PERICLES

Tyre, I now look from thee then, and to Tarsus 120
Intend my travel, where I'll hear from thee,
And by whose letters I'll dispose myself.
The care I had and have of subjects' good
On thee I lay, whose wisdom's strength can bear it.

I'll take thy word for faith, not ask thine oath; 125
Who shuns not to break one will sure crack both.
But in our orbs we'll live so round and safe
That time of both this truth shall ne'er convince:
Thou showed'st a subject's shine, I a true prince.

Exeunt