

Antony and Cleopatra

2.5

Enter Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas

CLEOPATRA

Give me some music±±music, moody food
Of us that trade in love.

CHARMIAN, IRAS, AND ALEXAS The music, ho!

Enter Mardian, the eunuch

CLEOPATRA

Let it alone. Let's to billiards. Come, Charmian.

CHARMIAN

My arm is sore. Best play with Mardian.

CLEOPATRA

As well a woman with an eunuch played 5
As with a woman. Come, you'll play with me, sir?

MARDIAN As well as I can, madam.

CLEOPATRA

And when good will is showed, though't come too
short

The actor may plead pardon. I'll none now.
Give me mine angle. We'll to th' river. There, 10
My music playing far off, I will betray
Tawny-finned fishes. My bended hook shall pierce
Their slimy jaws, and as I draw them up
I'll think them every one an Antony,
And say `Ah ha, you're caught!'

CHARMIAN

'Twas merry when 15

You wagered on your angling, when your diver
Did hang a salt fish on his hook, which he
With fervency drew up.

CLEOPATRA

That time±±O times!±±
I laughed him out of patience, and that night
I laughed him into patience, and next morn, 20
Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed,
Then put my tires and mantles on him whilst
I wore his sword Philippan.

Enter a Messenger

O, from Italy.

Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears,
That long time have been barren.

MESSENGER

Madam, madam!

25

CLEOPATRA

Antonio's dead. If thou say so, villain,
Thou kill'st thy mistress; but well and free,
If thou so yield him, there is gold, and here
My bluest veins to kiss±±a hand that kings
Have lipped, and trembled kissing.

MESSENGER

First, madam, he is well.

30

CLEOPATRA

Why, there's more gold. But, sirrah, mark: we use
To say the dead are well. Bring it to that,
The gold I give thee will I melt and pour
Down thy ill-uttering throat.

MESSENGER

Good madam, hear me.

35

CLEOPATRA

Well, go to, I will.

But there's no goodness in thy face. If Antony
Be free and healthful, so tart a favour
To trumpet such good tidings! If not well,
Thou shouldst come like a Fury crowned with snakes,
Not like a formal man.

40

MESSENGER

Will't please you hear me?

CLEOPATRA

I have a mind to strike thee ere thou speak'st.
Yet if thou say Antony lives, is well,
Or friends with Caesar, or not captive to him,
I'll set thee in a shower of gold, and hail
Rich pearls upon thee.

45

MESSENGER

Madam, he's well.

CLEOPATRA

Well said.

MESSENGER

And friends with Caesar.

CLEOPATRA

Thou'rt an honest man.

MESSENGER

Caesar and he are greater friends than ever.

CLEOPATRA

Make thee a fortune from me.

MESSENGER

But yet, madam±±

CLEOPATRA

I do not like `But yet'; it does allay 50
 The good precedence. Fie upon `But yet'.
 `But yet' is as a jailer to bring forth
 Some monstrous malefactor. Prithee, friend,
 Pour out the pack of matter to mine ear,
 The good and bad together. He's friends with Caesar, 55
 In state of health, thou sayst; and, thou sayst, free.

MESSENGER
 Free, madam? No, I made no such report.
 He's bound unto Octavia.

CLEOPATRA For what good turn?

MESSENGER
 For the best turn i'th' bed.

CLEOPATRA I am pale, Charmian.

MESSENGER
 Madam, he's married to Octavia. 60

CLEOPATRA
 The most infectious pestilence upon thee!
She strikes him down

MESSENGER
 Good madam, patience!

CLEOPATRA What say you?
She strikes him
 Hence, horrible villain, or I'll spurn thine eyes
 Like balls before me. I'll unhair thy head,
She hales him up and down
 Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stewed in brine, 65
 Smarting in ling'ring pickle.

MESSENGER Gracious madam,
 I that do bring the news made not the match.

CLEOPATRA
 Say 'tis not so, a province I will give thee,
 And make thy fortunes proud. The blow thou hadst
 Shall make thy peace for moving me to rage, 70
 And I will boot thee with what gift beside
 Thy modesty can beg.

MESSENGER He's married, madam.

CLEOPATRA
 Rogue, thou hast lived too long.
She draws a knife

MESSENGER Nay then, I'll run.

What mean you, madam? I have made no fault.

Exit

CHARMIAN

Good madam, keep yourself within yourself.

75

The man is innocent.

CLEOPATRA

Some innocents 'scape not the thunderbolt.

Melt Egypt into Nile, and kindly creatures

Turn all to serpents! Call the slave again.

Though I am mad I will not bite him. Call!

80

CHARMIAN

He is afeard to come.

CLEOPATRA

I will not hurt him.

[Exit Charmian]

These hands do lack nobility that they strike

A meaner than myself, since I myself

Have given myself the cause.

Enter the Messenger again [with Charmian]

Come hither,

sir.

Though it be honest, it is never good

85

To bring bad news. Give to a gracious message

An host of tongues, but let ill tidings tell

Themselves when they be felt.

MESSENGER I have done my duty.

CLEOPATRA Is he married?

90

I cannot hate thee worser than I do

If thou again say 'Yes'.

MESSENGER

He's married, madam.

CLEOPATRA

The gods confound thee! Dost thou hold there still?

MESSENGER

Should I lie, madam?

CLEOPATRA

O, I would thou didst,

So half my Egypt were submerged and made

95

A cistern for scaled snakes. Go, get thee hence.

Hadst thou Narcissus in thy face, to me

Thou wouldst appear most ugly. He is married?

MESSENGER

I crave your highness' pardon.

CLEOPATRA

He is married?

MESSENGER

Take no offence that I would not offend you. 100
To punish me for what you make me do
Seems much unequal. He's married to Octavia.

CLEOPATRA

O that his fault should make a knave of thee,
That act not what thou'rt sure of! Get thee hence.
The merchandise which thou hast brought from
Rome 105
Are all too dear for me. Lie they upon thy hand,
And be undone by 'em.

Exit Messenger

CHARMIAN Good your highness, patience.

CLEOPATRA

In praising Antony I have dispraised Caesar.

CHARMIAN Many times, madam.

CLEOPATRA

I am paid for't now. Lead me from hence. 110
I faint. O Iras, Charmian±±'tis no matter.
Go to the fellow, good Alexas, bid him
Report the feature of Octavia: her years,
Her inclination; let him not leave out
The colour of her hair. Bring me word quickly. 115

Exit Alexas

Let him for ever go±±let him not, Charmian;
Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon,
The other way's a Mars. *[To Mardian]* Bid you Alexas
Bring me word how tall she is. Pity me, Charmian,
But do not speak to me. Lead me to my chamber. 120

Exeunt