

Timon of Athens

5.1

Enter Poet and Painter

PAINTER As I took note of the place, it cannot be far where he abides.

POET What's to be thought of him? Does the rumour hold for true that he's so full of gold?

PAINTER Certain. Alcibiades reports it. Phrynia and Timandra had gold of him. He likewise enriched poor straggling soldiers with great quantity. 'Tis said he gave unto his steward a mighty sum.

POET Then this breaking of his has been but a try for his friends?

10

PAINTER Nothing else. You shall see him a palm in Athens again, and flourish with the highest. Therefore 'tis not amiss we tender our loves to him in this supposed distress of his. It will show honestly in us, and is very likely to load our purposes with what they travail for, if it be a just and true report that goes of his having.

POET What have you now to present unto him?

PAINTER Nothing at this time, but my visitation; only I will promise him an excellent piece.

POET I must serve him so too, tell him of an intent that's coming toward him.

PAINTER Good as the best.

[Enter Timon from his cave, unobserved]

Promising is the very air o'th' time; it opens the eyes of expectation. Performance is ever the duller for his act, and but in the plainer and simpler kind of people the deed of saying is quite out of use. To promise is most courtly and fashionable. Performance is a kind of will or testament which argues a great sickness in his judgement that makes it.

TIMON *(aside)* Excellent workman, thou canst not paint a man so bad as is thyself.

POET *(to Painter)* I am thinking what I shall say I have provided for him. It must be a personating of himself, a satire against the softness of prosperity, with a discovery

of the infinite flatteries that follow youth and opulency. 35

TIMON (*aside*) Must thou needs stand for a villain in thine
own work? Wilt thou whip thine own faults in other
men? Do so; I have gold for thee.

POET (*to Painter*) Nay, let's seek him.
Then do we sin against our own estate 40
When we may profit meet and come too late.

PAINTER True.
When the day serves, before black-cornered night,
Find what thou want'st by free and offered light.
Come. 45

TIMON (*aside*)
I'll meet you at the turn. What a god's gold,
That he is worshipped in a baser temple
Than where swine feed!
'Tis thou that rigg'st the barque and plough'st the foam,
Settlest admireÁd reverence in a slave. 50
To thee be worship, and thy saints for aye
Be crowned with plagues, that thee alone obey.
Fit I meet them.
He comes forward to them

POET
Hail, worthy Timon!

PAINTER Our late noble master!

TIMON
Have I once lived to see two honest men? 55

POET
Sir, having often of your open bounty tasted,
Hearing you were retired, your friends fall'n off,
Whose thankless natures, O abhorreÁd spirits,
Not all the whips of heaven are large enough±±
What, to you, 60
Whose star-like nobleness gave life and influence
To their whole being! I am rapt, and cannot cover
The monstrous bulk of this ingratitude
With any size of words.

TIMON
Let it go naked; men may see't the better. 65
You that are honest, by being what you are
Make them best seen and known.

PAINTER He and myself
Have travelled in the great show'r of your gifts,
And sweetly felt it.

TIMON Ay, you are honest men.

PAINTER
We are hither come to offer you our service. 70

TIMON
Most honest men. Why, how shall I requite you?
Can you eat roots and drink cold water? No.

POET AND PAINTER
What we can do we'll do to do you service.

TIMON
You're honest men. You've heard that I have gold,
I am sure you have. Speak truth; you're honest men. 75

PAINTER
So it is said, my noble lord, but therefor
Came not my friend nor I.

TIMON
Good honest men. (*To Painter*) Thou draw'st a
counterfeit
Best in all Athens; thou'rt indeed the best;
Thou counterfeit'st most lively.

PAINTER So so, my lord. 80

TIMON
E'en so, sir, as I say. (*To Poet*) And for thy fiction,
Why, thy verse swells with stuff so fine and smooth
That thou art even natural in thine art.
But for all this, my honest-natured friends,
I must needs say you have a little fault. 85
Marry, 'tis not monstrous in you, neither wish I
You take much pains to mend.

POET AND PAINTER Beseech your honour
To make it known to us.

TIMON You'll take it ill.

POET AND PAINTER Most thankfully, my lord.

TIMON Will you indeed? 90

POET AND PAINTER Doubt it not, worthy lord.

TIMON
There's never a one of you but trusts a knave
That mightily deceives you.

POET AND PAINTER Do we, my lord?

TIMON

Ay, and you hear him cog, see him dissemble,
Know his gross patchery, love him, feed him, 95
Keep in your bosom; yet remain assured
That he's a made-up villain.

PAINTER I know none such, my lord.

POET Nor I.

TIMON

Look you, I love you well. I'll give you gold, 100
Rid me these villains from your companies.
Hang them or stab them, drown them in a draught,
Confound them by some course, and come to me,
I'll give you gold enough.

POET AND PAINTER Name them, my lord, let's know them.

TIMON

You that way and you this±±but two in company±± 105
Each man apart, all single and alone,
Yet an arch-villain keeps him company.
[To Painter] If where thou art two villains shall not be,
Come not near him. [To Poet] If thou wouldst not
reside

But where one villain is, then him abandon. 110
Hence; pack! [Striking him] There's gold. You came
for gold, ye slaves.

[Striking Painter] You have work for me; there's
payment. Hence!

[Striking Poet] You are an alchemist; make gold of that.
Out, rascal dogs!

*Exeunt [Poet and Painter one way,
Timon into his cave]*