

Antony and Cleopatra

1.4

Enter Octavius reading a letter, Lepidus, and their train

CAESAR

You may see, Lepidus, and henceforth know,
It is not Caesar's natural vice to hate
Our great competitor. From Alexandria
This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike 5
Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
More womanly than he; hardly gave audience
Or vouchsafed to think he had partners. You shall find
there
A man who is the abstract of all faults
That all men follow.

LEPIDUS I must not think there are 10
Evils enough to darken all his goodness.
His faults in him seem as the spots of heaven,
More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary
Rather than purchased; what he cannot change
Than what he chooses. 15

CAESAR

You are too indulgent. Let's grant it is not
Amisss to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy,
To give a kingdom for a mirth, to sit
And keep the turn of tippling with a slave,
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet 20
With knaves that smells of sweat. Say this becomes
him±±
As his composure must be rare indeed
Whom these things cannot blemish±±yet must Antony
No way excuse his foils when we do bear
So great weight in his lightness. If he filled 25
His vacancy with his voluptuousness,
Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones
Call on him for't. But to confound such time
That drums him from his sport, and speaks as loud

As his own state and ours±±'tis to be chid 30
As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,
Pawn their experience to their present pleasure,
And so rebel to judgement.

Enter a Messenger

LEPIDUS Here's more news.

MESSENGER

Thy biddings have been done, and every hour,
Most noble Caesar, shalt thou have report 35
How 'tis abroad. Pompey is strong at sea,
And it appears he is beloved of those
That only have feared Caesar. To the ports
The discontents repair, and men's reports
Give him much wronged.

[Exit]

CAESAR I should have known no less. 40

It hath been taught us from the primal state
That he which is was wished until he were,
And the ebb'd man, ne'er loved till ne'er worth love,
Comes deared by being lacked. This common body,
Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream, 45
Goes to, and back, lackeying the varying tide,
To rot itself with motion.

[Enter a second Messenger]

SECOND MESSENGER Caesar, I bring thee word
Menecrates and Menas, famous pirates,
Makes the sea serve them, which they ear and wound
With keels of every kind. Many hot inroads 50
They make in Italy. The borders maritime
Lack blood to think on't, and flush youth revolt.
No vessel can peep forth but 'tis as soon
Taken as seen; for Pompey's name strikes more
Than could his war resisted.

[Exit]

CAESAR Antony, 55

Leave thy lascivious wassails. When thou once
Was beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
Did famine follow, whom thou fought'st against±±
Though daintily brought up±±with patience more 60

Than savages could suffer. Thou didst drink
The stale of horses, and the gilded puddle
Which beasts would cough at. Thy palate then did
deign

The roughest berry on the rudest hedge.
Yea, like the stag when snow the pasture sheets, 65
The barks of trees thou browsed. On the Alps
It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
Which some did die to look on; and all this±±
It wounds thine honour that I speak it now±±
Was borne so like a soldier that thy cheek 70
So much as lanked not.

LEPIDUS 'Tis pity of him.

CAESAR Let his shames quickly
Drive him to Rome. 'Tis time we twain
Did show ourselves i'th' field; and to that end 75
Assemble we immediate council. Pompey
Thrives in our idleness.

LEPIDUS Tomorrow, Caesar,
I shall be furnished to inform you rightly
Both what by sea and land I can be able
To front this present time.

CAESAR Till which encounter 80
It is my business, too. Farewell.

LEPIDUS
Farewell, my lord. What you shall know meantime
Of stirs abroad I shall beseech you, sir,
To let me be partaker.

CAESAR
Doubt not, sir. I knew it for my bond. 85

Exeunt