

Titus Andronicus

2.3

Enter Aaron alone, with gold

AARON

He that had wit would think that I had none,
To bury so much gold under a tree
And never after to inherit it.
Let him that thinks of me so abjectly
Know that this gold must coin a stratagem
Which, cunningly effected, will beget
A very excellent piece of villainy.
And so repose, sweet gold, for their unrest
That have their alms out of the Empress' chest.
He hides the gold.

5

Enter Tamora alone to the Moor

TAMORA

My lovely Aaron, wherefore look'st thou sad
When everything doth make a gleeful boast?
The birds chant melody on every bush,
The snakes lies rolleÁd in the cheerful sun,
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
And make a chequered shadow on the ground.
Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit,
And whilst the babbling echo mocks the hounds,
Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns,
As if a double hunt were heard at once,
Let us sit down and mark their yellowing noise,
And after conflict such as was supposed
The wand'ring prince and Dido once enjoyed
When with a happy storm they were surprised,
And curtained with a counsel-keeping cave,
We may, each wreatheÁd in the other's arms,
Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber
Whiles hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds
Be unto us as is a nurse's song
Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep.

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AARON

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,

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Saturn is dominator over mine.
What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
My silence, and my cloudy melancholy,
My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls
Even as an adder when she doth unroll 35
To do some fatal execution?
No, madam, these are no venereal signs.
Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.
Hark, Tamora, the empress of my soul, 40
Which never hopes more heaven than rests in thee,
This is the day of doom for Bassianus.
His Philomel must lose her tongue today,
Thy sons make pillage of her chastity
And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood. 45
Seest thou this letter? (*Giving a letter*) Take it up, I
pray thee,
And give the King this fatal-plotted scroll.
Now question me no more. We are espied.
Here comes a parcel of our hopeful booty,
Which dreads not yet their lives' destruction. 50

Enter Bassianus and Lavinia

TAMORA (*aside to Aaron*)

Ah, my sweet Moor, sweeter to me than life!

AARON (*aside to Tamora*)

No more, great Empress; Bassianus comes.
Be cross with him, and I'll go fetch thy sons
To back thy quarrels, whatsoe'er they be.

Exit

BASSIANUS

Who have we here? Rome's royal empress 55
Unfurnished of her well-beseeming troop?
Or is it Dian, habited like her
Who hath abandon'd her holy groves
To see the general hunting in this forest?

TAMORA

Saucy controller of my private steps, 60
Had I the power that some say Dian had,
Thy temples should be planted presently
With horns, as was Actaeon's, and the hounds

Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs,
Unmannerly intruder as thou art! 65

LAVINIA

Under your patience, gentle Empress,
'Tis thought you have a goodly gift in horning,
And to be doubted that your Moor and you
Are singled forth to try experiments.
Jove shield your husband from his hounds today±± 70
'Tis pity they should take him for a stag.

BASSIANUS

Believe me, Queen, your swart Cimmerian
Doth make your honour of his body's hue,
Spotted, detested, and abominable.
Why are you sequestered from all your train, 75
Dismounted from your snow-white goodly steed,
And wandered hither to an obscure plot,
Accompanied but with a barbarous Moor,
If foul desire had not conducted you?

LAVINIA

And being intercepted in your sport, 80
Great reason that my noble lord be rated
For sauciness. (*To Bassianus*) I pray you, let us hence,
And let her joy her raven-coloured love.
This valley fits the purpose passing well.

BASSIANUS

The King my brother shall have note of this. 85

LAVINIA

Ay, for these slips have made him noted long.
Good King, to be so mightily abused!

TAMORA

Why have I patience to endure all this?
Enter Chiron and Demetrius

DEMETRIUS

How now, dear sovereign and our gracious mother,
Why doth your highness look so pale and wan? 90

TAMORA

Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?
These two have 'ticed me hither to this place.
A barren detested vale you see it is;
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
Overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe. 95

Here never shines the sun, here nothing breeds
 Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven,
 And when they showed me this abhorred pit
 They told me here at dead time of the night
 A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes, 100
 Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins
 Would make such fearful and confuse cries
 As any mortal body hearing it
 Should straight fall mad or else die suddenly.
 No sooner had they told this hellish tale 105
 But straight they told me they would bind me here
 Unto the body of a dismal yew
 And leave me to this miserable death.
 And then they called me foul adulteress,
 Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms 110
 That ever ear did hear to such effect.
 And had you not by wondrous fortune come,
 This vengeance on me had they executed.
 Revenge it as you love your mother's life,
 Or be ye not henceforward called my children. 115

DEMETRIUS

This is a witness that I am thy son.
He stabs Bassianus

CHIRON

And this for me, struck home to show my strength.
He stabs Bassianus, who dies.
[Tamora turns to Lavinia]

LAVINIA

Ay, come, Semiramis—nay, barbarous Tamora,
 For no name fits thy nature but thy own.

TAMORA *(to Chiron)*

Give me the poniard. You shall know, my boys, 120
 Your mother's hand shall right your mother's wrong.

DEMETRIUS

Stay, madam, here is more belongs to her.
 First thresh the corn, then after burn the straw.
 This minion stood upon her chastity,
 Upon her nuptial vow, her loyalty, 125
 And with that quaint hope braves your mightiness.
 And shall she carry this unto her grave?

CHIRON

An if she do I would I were an eunuch.
Drag hence her husband to some secret hole,
And make his dead trunk pillow to our lust. 130

TAMORA

But when ye have the honey ye desire
Let not this wasp outlive, us both to sting.

CHIRON

I warrant you, madam, we will make that sure.
Come, mistress, now perforce we will enjoy
That nice-preserveÁd honesty of yours. 135

LAVINIA

O Tamora, thou bearest a woman's face±±

TAMORA

I will not hear her speak. Away with her!

LAVINIA

Sweet lords, entreat her hear me but a word.

DEMETRIUS (*to Tamora*)

Listen, fair madam, let it be your glory
To see her tears, but be your heart to them 140
As unrelenting flint to drops of rain.

LAVINIA

When did the tiger's young ones teach the dam?
O, do not learn her wrath! She taught it thee.
The milk thou sucked'st from her did turn to marble,
Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny. 145
Yet every mother breeds not sons alike.
(*To Chiron*) Do thou entreat her show a woman's pity.

CHIRON

What, wouldst thou have me prove myself a bastard?

LAVINIA

'Tis true, the raven doth not hatch a lark.
Yet have I heard±±O, could I find it now!±± 150
The lion, moved with pity, did endure
To have his princely paws pared all away.
Some say that ravens foster forlorn children
The whilst their own birds famish in their nests.
O, be to me, though thy hard heart say no, 155
Nothing so kind, but something pitiful.

TAMORA

I know not what it means. Away with her!

LAVINIA

O, let me teach thee for my father's sake,
That gave thee life when well he might have slain
thee.

Be not obdurate, open thy deaf ears.

160

TAMORA

Hadst thou in person ne'er offended me
Even for his sake am I pitiless.
Remember, boys, I poured forth tears in vain
To save your brother from the sacrifice,
But fierce Andronicus would not relent.
Therefore away with her, and use her as you will±±
The worse to her, the better loved of me.

165

LAVINIA

O Tamora, be called a gentle queen,
And with thine own hands kill me in this place;
For 'tis not life that I have begged so long;
Poor I was slain when Bassianus died.

170

TAMORA

What begg'st thou then, fond woman? Let me go.

LAVINIA

'Tis present death I beg, and one thing more
That womanhood denies my tongue to tell.
O, keep me from their worse-than-killing lust,
And tumble me into some loathsome pit
Where never man's eye may behold my body.
Do this, and be a charitable murderer.

175

TAMORA

So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee.
No, let them satisfy their lust on thee.

180

DEMETRIUS (to Lavinia)

Away, for thou hast stayed us here too long.

LAVINIA

No grace, no womanhood±±ah, beastly creature,
The blot and enemy to our general name,
Confusion fall±±

CHIRON

Nay then, I'll stop your mouth. (To Demetrius) Bring
thou her husband.

185

This is the hole where Aaron bid us hide him.

Demetrius and Chiron cast Bassianus' body into the

*pit [and cover the mouth of it with branches], then
exeunt dragging Lavinia*

TAMORA

Farewell, my sons. See that you make her sure.
Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed
Till all the Andronici be made away.
Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor, 190
And let my spleenful sons this trull deflower.

Exit

*Enter Aaron with Quintus and Martius, two of
Titus' sons*

AARON

Come on, my lords, the better foot before.
Straight will I bring you to the loathsome pit
Where I espied the panther fast asleep.

QUINTUS

My sight is very dull, whate'er it bodes. 195

MARTIUS

And mine, I promise you. Were it not for shame,
Well could I leave our sport to sleep awhile.

He falls into the pit

QUINTUS

What, art thou fallen? What subtle hole is this,
Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briars
Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood 200
As fresh as morning dew distilled on flowers?
A very fatal place it seems to me.
Speak, brother. Hast thou hurt thee with the fall?

MARTIUS

O brother, with the dismall'st object hurt
That ever eye with sight made heart lament. 205

AARON *(aside)*

Now will I fetch the King to find them here,
That he thereby may have a likely guess
How these were they that made away his brother.

Exit

MARTIUS

Why dost not comfort me and help me out
From this unhallowed and bloodstain'd hole? 210

QUINTUS

I am surprise'd with an uncouth fear.

A chilling sweat o'erruns my trembling joints;
My heart suspects more than mine eye can see.

MARTIUS

To prove thou hast a true-divining heart,
Aaron and thou look down into this den, 215
And see a fearful sight of blood and death.

QUINTUS

Aaron is gone, and my compassionate heart
Will not permit mine eyes once to behold
The thing whereat it trembles by surmise.
O, tell me who it is, for ne'er till now 220
Was I a child to fear I know not what.

MARTIUS

Lord Bassianus lies berayed in blood
All on a heap, like to a slaughtered lamb,
In this detested, dark, blood-drinking pit.

QUINTUS

If it be dark how dost thou know 'tis he? 225

MARTIUS

Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
A precious ring that lightens all this hole,
Which like a taper in some monument
Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks
And shows the ragged entrails of this pit. 230
So pale did shine the moon on Pyramus
When he by night lay bathed in maiden blood.
O brother, help me with thy fainting hand±±
If fear hath made thee faint, as me it hath±±
Out of this fell devouring receptacle, 235
As hateful as Cocytus' misty mouth.

QUINTUS

Reach me thy hand, that I may help thee out,
Or, wanting strength to do thee so much good,
I may be plucked into the swallowing womb
Of this deep pit, poor Bassianus' grave. 240
I have no strength to pluck thee to the brink,

MARTIUS

Nor I no strength to climb without thy help.

QUINTUS

Thy hand once more, I will not loose again
Till thou art here aloft or I below.

Thou canst not come to me; I come to thee. 245

He falls into the pit.

*Enter Saturninus the Emperor [with attendants],
and Aaron the Moor*

SATURNINUS

Along with me! I'll see what hole is here,
And what he is that now is leapt into it.

He speaks into the pit

Say, who art thou that lately didst descend
Into this gaping hollow of the earth?

MARTIUS

The unhappy sons of old Andronicus, 250
Brought hither in a most unlucky hour
To find thy brother Bassianus dead.

SATURNINUS

My brother dead! I know thou dost but jest.
He and his lady both are at the lodge
Upon the north side of this pleasant chase. 255
'Tis not an hour since I left them there.

MARTIUS

We know not where you left them all alive,
But, out alas, here have we found him dead!
Enter Tamora, Titus Andronicus, and Lucius

TAMORA Where is my lord the King?

SATURNINUS

Here, Tamora, though gripped with killing grief. 260

TAMORA

Where is thy brother Bassianus?

SATURNINUS

Now to the bottom dost thou search my wound.
Poor Bassianus here lies murdered.

TAMORA

Then all too late I bring this fatal writ,
The complot of this timeless tragedy, 265
And wonder greatly that man's face can fold
In pleasing smiles such murderous tyranny.
She giveth Saturnine a letter

SATURNINUS (*reads*)

'An if we miss to meet him handsomely,
Sweet huntsman Bassianus 'tis we mean
Do thou so much as dig the grave for him. 270

Thou know'st our meaning. Look for thy reward
Among the nettles at the elder tree
Which overshades the mouth of that same pit
Where we decreed to bury Bassianus.
Do this, and purchase us thy lasting friends.' 275
O Tamora, was ever heard the like!
This is the pit, and this the elder tree.
Look, sirs, if you can find the huntsman out
That should have murdered Bassianus here.

AARON

My gracious lord, here is the bag of gold. 280

SATURNINUS *(to Titus)*

Two of thy whelps, fell curs of bloody kind,
Have here bereft my brother of his life.
Sirs, drag them from the pit unto the prison.
There let them bide until we have devised
Some never-heard-of torturing pain for them. 285

TAMORA

What, are they in this pit? O wondrous thing!
How easily murder is discovereÁd!
Attendants drag Quintus, Martius, and Bassianus'
body from the pit

TITUS *(kneeling)*

High Emperor, upon my feeble knee
I beg this boon with tears not lightly shed:
That this fell fault of my accurseÁd sons±± 290
AccurseÁd if the fault be proved in them±±

SATURNINUS

If it be proved? You see it is apparent.
Who found this letter? Tamora, was it you?

TAMORA

Andronicus himself did take it up.

TITUS

I did, my lord, yet let me be their bail, 295
For by my father's reverend tomb I vow
They shall be ready at your highness' will
To answer their suspicion with their lives.

SATURNINUS

Thou shalt not bail them. See thou follow me.
Some bring the murdered body, some the murderers. 300
Let them not speak a word±±the guilt is plain;

For by my soul, were there worse end than death
That end upon them should be executed.

[Exit]

TAMORA

Andronicus, I will entreat the King.

Fear not thy sons, they shall do well enough.

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TITUS *[rising]*

Come, Lucius, come, stay not to talk with them.

Exeunt