

Pericles, Prince of Tyre

Sc.4

*Enter Cleon, the Governor of Tarsus, with Dionyza
his wife, and others*

CLEON

My Dionyza, shall we rest us here
And, by relating tales of others' griefs,
See if 'twill teach us to forget our own?

DIONYZA

That were to blow at fire in hope to quench it,
For who digs hills because they do aspire 5
Throws down one mountain to cast up a higher.
O my distresse! Ad lord, e'en such our griefs are;
Here they're but felt and seen with midges' eyes,
But like to groves, being topped they higher rise.

CLEON

O Dionyza, 10
Who wanteth food and will not say he wants it,
Or can conceal his hunger till he famish?
Our tongues our sorrows dictate to sound deep
Our woes into the air, our eyes to weep
Till lungs fetch breath that may proclaim them louder, 15
That, if heav'n slumber while their creatures want,
They may awake their helps to comfort them.
I'll then discourse our woes, felt sev'ral years,
And, wanting breath to speak, help me with tears.

DIONYZA

As you think best, sir. 20

CLEON

This Tarsus o'er which I have the government,
A city o'er whom plenty held full hand,
For riches strewed herself ev'n in the streets,
Whose tow'rs bore heads so high they kissed the clouds,
And strangers ne'er beheld but wondered at, 25
Whose men and dames so jetted and adorned
Like one another's glass to trim them by;
Their tables were stored full to glad the sight,
And not so much to feed on as delight.
All poverty was scorned, and pride so great 30
The name of help grew odious to repeat.

DIONYZA O, 'tis too true.

CLEON

But see what heav'n can do by this our change.
Those mouths who but of late earth, sea, and air
Were all too little to content and please, 35
Although they gave their creatures in abundance,
As houses are defiled for want of use,
They are now starved for want of exercise.
Those palates who, not yet two summers younger,
Must have inventions to delight the taste 40
Would now be glad of bread and beg for it.
Those mothers who to nuzzle up their babes
Thought naught too curious are ready now
To eat those little darlings whom they loved.
So sharp are hunger's teeth that man and wife 45
Draw lots who first shall die to lengthen life.
Here weeping stands a lord, there lies a lady dying,
Here many sink, yet those which see them fall
Have scarce strength left to give them burial.
Is not this true? 50

DIONYZA

Our cheeks and hollow eyes do witness it.

CLEON

O, let those cities that of plenty's cup
And her prosperities so largely taste
With their superfluous riots, heed these tears!
The misery of Tarsus may be theirs. 55

Enter a [fainting] Lord of Tarsus [slowly]

LORD Where's the Lord Governor?

CLEON

Here. Speak out thy sorrows which thou bring'st in
haste,

For comfort is too far for us t'expect.

LORD

We have descried upon our neighbouring shore
A portly sail of ships make hitherward. 60

CLEON I thought as much.

One sorrow never comes but brings an heir
That may succeed as his inheritor,
And so in ours. Some neighbour nation,

Taking advantage of our misery, 65
Hath stuffed these hollow vessels with their power
To beat us down, the which are down already,
And make a conquest of unhappy men,
Whereas no glory's got to overcome.

LORD

That's the least fear, for by the semblance 70
Of their white flags displayed they bring us peace,
And come to us as favourers, not foes.

CLEON

Thou speak'st like him's untutored to repeat;
Who makes the fairest show means most deceit.
But bring they what they will and what they can, 75
What need we fear?
Our grave's the low'st, and we are half-way there.
Go tell their gen'ral we attend him here
To know for what he comes, and whence he comes.

LORD I go, my lord. 80
Exit

CLEON

Welcome is peace, if he on peace consist;
If wars, we are unable to resist.
Enter [the Lord again conducting] Pericles with attendants

PERICLES *(to Cleon)*

Lord Governor, for so we hear you are,
Let not our ships and number of our men
Be like a beacon fixed t'amaze your eyes. 85
We have heard your miseries as far as Tyre,
Since entering your unshut gates have witnessed
The widowed desolation of your streets;
Nor come we to add sorrow to your hearts,
But to relieve them of their heavy load; 90
And these our ships, you happily may think
Are like the Trojan horse was fraught within
With bloody veins importing overthrow,
Are stored with corn to make your needy bread,
And give them life whom hunger starved half dead. 95

ALL OF TARSUS *[falling on their knees and weeping]*

The gods of Greece protect you, and we'll pray for you!

PERICLES Arise, I pray you, rise.

We do not look for reverence but for love,
And harbourage for me, my ships and men.

CLEON

The which when any shall not gratify, 100
Or pay you with unthankfulness in thought,
Be it our wives, our children, or ourselves,
The curse of heav'n and men succeed their evils!
Till when±±the which I hope shall ne'er be seen±±
Your grace is welcome to our town and us. 105

PERICLES

Which welcome we'll accept, feast here a while,
Until our stars that frown lend us a smile.

Exeunt