

Titus Andronicus

4.2

*Enter Aaron, Chiron, and Demetrius at one door,
and at the other door young Lucius and another
with a bundle of weapons, and verses writ upon
them*

CHIRON

Demetrius, here's the son of Lucius.
He hath some message to deliver us.

AARON

Ay, some mad message from his mad grandfather.

YOUNG LUCIUS

My lords, with all the humbleness I may
I greet your honours from Andronicus 5
(*Aside*) And pray the Roman gods confound you both.

DEMETRIUS

Gramercy, lovely Lucius. What's the news?

YOUNG LUCIUS (*aside*)

That you are both deciphered, that's the news,
For villains marked with rape. (*Aloud*) May it please
you,

My grandsire, well advised, hath sent by me 10
The goodliest weapons of his armoury
To gratify your honourable youth,
The hope of Rome, for so he bid me say;

His attendant gives the weapons

And so I do, and with his gifts present
Your lordships that, whenever you have need, 15
You may be armed and appointed well;
And so I leave you both (*aside*) like bloody villains.
Exit with attendant

DEMETRIUS

What's here—a scroll, and written round about?
Let's see.

'Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, 20
Non eget Mauri iaculis, nec arcu.'

CHIRON

O, 'tis a verse in Horace, I know it well.
I read it in the grammar long ago.

AARON

Ay, just, a verse in Horace; right, you have it.

(Aside) Now what a thing it is to be an ass! 25

Here's no sound jest. The old man hath found their
guilt,

And sends them weapons wrapped about with lines
That wound beyond their feeling to the quick.

But were our witty Empress well afoot

She would applaud Andronicus' conceit. 30

But let her rest in her unrest a while.

(To Chiron and Demetrius)

And now, young lords, was't not a happy star

Led us to Rome, strangers and, more than so,

Captives, to be advance'd to this height?

It did me good before the palace gate 35

To brave the Tribune in his brother's hearing.

DEMETRIUS

But me more good to see so great a lord

Basely insinuate and send us gifts.

AARON

Had he not reason, Lord Demetrius?

Did you not use his daughter very friendly? 40

DEMETRIUS

I would we had a thousand Roman dames

At such a bay, by turn to serve our lust.

CHIRON

A charitable wish, and full of love.

AARON

Here lacks but your mother for to say amen.

CHIRON

And that would she, for twenty thousand more. 45

DEMETRIUS

Come, let us go and pray to all the gods

For our belove'd mother in her pains.

AARON

Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over.

Trumpets sound

DEMETRIUS

Why do the Emperor's trumpets flourish thus?

CHIRON

Belike for joy the Emperor hath a son. 50

DEMETRIUS

Soft, who comes here?

Enter Nurse with a blackamoor child

NURSE Good morrow, lords.

O tell me, did you see Aaron the Moor?

AARON

Well, more or less, or ne'er a whit at all,
Here Aaron is; and what with Aaron now?

NURSE

O gentle Aaron, we are all undone. 55

Now help, or woe betide thee evermore!

AARON

Why, what a caterwauling dost thou keep!
What dost thou wrap and fumble in thy arms?

NURSE

O, that which I would hide from heaven's eye,
Our Empress' shame and stately Rome's disgrace. 60
She is delivered, lords, she is delivered.

AARON

To whom?

NURSE I mean she is brought abed.

AARON

Well, God give her good rest. What hath he sent her?

NURSE

A devil.

AARON Why then, she is the devil's dam.

A joyful issue! 65

NURSE

A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue.
Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad
Amongst the fair-faced breeders of our clime.
The Empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,
And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point. 70

AARON

Zounds, ye whore, is black so base a hue?
Sweet blowze, you are a beauteous blossom, sure.

DEMETRIUS Villain, what hast thou done?

AARON That which thou canst not undo.

CHIRON Thou hast undone our mother. 75

AARON Villain, I have done thy mother.

DEMETRIUS

And therein, hellish dog, thou hast undone her.
Woe to her chance, and damned her loatheÁd choice,
Accursed the offspring of so foul a fiend.

CHIRON

It shall not live.

AARON

It shall not die.

80

NURSE

Aaron, it must; the mother wills it so.

AARON

What, must it, nurse? Then let no man but I
Do execution on my flesh and blood.

DEMETRIUS

I'll broach the tadpole on my rapier's point.

Nurse, give it me. My sword shall soon dispatch it. 85

AARON

Sooner this sword shall plough thy bowels up.

He takes the child and draws his sword

Stay, murderous villains, will you kill your brother?

Now, by the burning tapers of the sky

That shone so brightly when this boy was got,

He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point

90

That touches this, my first-born son and heir.

I tell you, younglings, not Enceladus

With all his threat'ning band of Typhon's brood,

Nor great Alcides, nor the god of war

Shall seize this prey out of his father's hands. 95

What, what, ye sanguine, shallow-hearted boys,

Ye whitelimed walls, ye alehouse painted signs,

Coal-black is better than another hue

In that it scorns to bear another hue;

For all the water in the ocean

100

Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,

Although she lave them hourly in the flood.

Tell the Empress from me I am of age

To keep mine own, excuse it how she can.

DEMETRIUS

Wilt thou betray thy noble mistress thus?

105

AARON

My mistress is my mistress, this myself,

The figure and the picture of my youth.

This before all the world do I prefer;

This maugre all the world will I keep safe,
Or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome. 110

DEMETRIUS

By this our mother is for ever shamed.

CHIRON

Rome will despise her for this foul escape.

NURSE

The Emperor in his rage will doom her death.

CHIRON

I blush to think upon this ignomy.

AARON

Why, there's the privilege your beauty bears. 115

Fie, treacherous hue, that will betray with blushing

The close enacts and counsels of thy heart.

Here's a young lad framed of another leer.

Look how the black slave smiles upon the father,

As who should say 'Old lad, I am thine own.' 120

He is your brother, lords, sensibly fed

Of that self blood that first gave life to you,

And from that womb where you imprisoned were

He is enfranchiseÁd and come to light.

Nay, he is your brother by the surer side, 125

Although my seal be stampeÁd in his face.

NURSE

Aaron, what shall I say unto the Empress?

DEMETRIUS

Advise thee, Aaron, what is to be done,

And we will all subscribe to thy advice.

Save thou the child, so we may all be safe. 130

AARON

Then sit we down, and let us all consult.

My son and I will have the wind of you.

Keep there; now talk at pleasure of your safety.

They sit

DEMETRIUS *(to the Nurse)*

How many women saw this child of his?

AARON

Why, so, brave lords, when we do join in league 135

I am a lamb; but if you brave the Moor,

The chafeÁd boar, the mountain lioness,

The ocean swells not so as Aaron storms.

(To the Nurse) But say again, how many saw the
child?

NURSE

Cornelia the midwife, and myself, 140
And no one else but the delivered Empress.

AARON

The Empress, the midwife, and yourself.
Two may keep counsel when the third's away.
Go to the Empress, tell her this I said.

He kills her

`Wheak, wheak'±±so cries a pig prepareÁd to the spit. 145

DEMETRIUS

What mean'st thou, Aaron? Wherefore didst thou this?

AARON

O Lord, sir, 'tis a deed of policy.
Shall she live to betray this guilt of ours±±
A long-tongued, babbling gossip? No, lords, no.
And now be it known to you my full intent. 150
Not far, one Muliteus my countryman
His wife but yesternight was brought to bed.
His child is like to her, fair as you are.
Go pack with him, and give the mother gold,
And tell them both the circumstance of all, 155
And how by this their child shall be advanced
And be receiveÁd for the Emperor's heir,
And substituted in the place of mine,
To calm this tempest whirling in the court;
And let the Emperor dandle him for his own. 160
Hark ye, lords, you see I have given her physic,
And you must needs bestow her funeral.
The fields are near, and you are gallant grooms.
This done, see that you take no longer days,
But send the midwife presently to me. 165
The midwife and the nurse well made away,
Then let the ladies tattle what they please.

CHIRON

Aaron, I see thou wilt not trust the air
With secrets.

DEMETRIUS

For this care of Tamora,
Herself and hers are highly bound to thee. 170

*Exeunt Chiron and Demetrius with
the Nurse's body*

AARON

Now to the Goths, as swift as swallow flies,
There to dispose this treasure in mine arms
And secretly to greet the Empress' friends.
Come on, you thick-lipped slave, I'll bear you hence,
For it is you that puts us to our shifts. 175
I'll make you feed on berries and on roots,
And fat on curds and whey, and suck the goat,
And cabin in a cave, and bring you up
To be a warrior and command a camp.
Exit with the child