

Titus Andronicus

5.1

*[Flourish.] Enter Lucius with an army of Goths,
with drummers and soldiers*

LUCIUS

ApproveÁd warriors and my faithful friends,
I have receiveÁd letters from great Rome
Which signifies what hate they bear their emperor
And how desirous of our sight they are.
Therefore, great lords, be as your titles witness, 5
Imperious, and impatient of your wrongs,
And wherein Rome hath done you any scath
Let him make treble satisfaction.

A GOTH

Brave slip sprung from the great Andronicus,
Whose name was once our terror, now our comfort, 10
Whose high exploits and honourable deeds
Ingrateful Rome requites with foul contempt,
Be bold in us. We'll follow where thou lead'st,
Like stinging bees in hottest summer's day
Led by their master to the flowered fields, 15
And be avenged on curseÁd Tamora.

GOTHS

And as he saith, so say we all with him.

LUCIUS

I humbly thank him, and I thank you all.
But who comes here, led by a lusty Goth?
*Enter a Goth, leading of Aaron with his child in his
arms*

GOTH

RenowneÁd Lucius, from our troops I strayed 20
To gaze upon a ruinous monastery,
And as I earnestly did fix mine eye
Upon the wasted building, suddenly
I heard a child cry underneath a wall.
I made unto the noise, when soon I heard 25
The crying babe controlled with this discourse:
`Peace, tawny slave, half me and half thy dam!

Did not thy hue bewray whose brat thou art,
Had nature lent thee but thy mother's look,
Villain, thou mightst have been an emperor. 30
But where the bull and cow are both milk-white
They never do beget a coal-black calf.
Peace, villain, peace!'+even thus he rates the babe++
'For I must bear thee to a trusty Goth
Who, when he knows thou art the Empress' babe, 35
Will hold thee dearly for thy mother's sake.'
With this, my weapon drawn, I rushed upon him,
Surprised him suddenly, and brought him hither
To use as you think needful of the man.

LUCIUS

O worthy Goth, this is the incarnate devil 40
That robbed Andronicus of his good hand.
This is the pearl that pleased your Empress' eye,
And here's the base fruit of her burning lust.
(To Aaron) Say, wall-eyed slave, whither wouldst thou
convey
This growing image of thy fiendlike face? 45
Why dost not speak? What, deaf? What, not a word?
A halter, soldiers! Hang him on this tree,
And by his side his fruit of bastardy.

AARON

Touch not the boy; he is of royal blood.

LUCIUS

Too like the sire for ever being good. 50
First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl++
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.
Get me a ladder.

[A Goth brings a ladder which Aaron climbs]

AARON

Lucius, save the child,
And bear it from me to the Empress.
If thou do this, I'll show thee wondrous things 55
That highly may advantage thee to hear.
If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,
I'll speak no more but 'Vengeance rot you all!'

LUCIUS

Say on, and if it please me which thou speak'st
Thy child shall live, and I will see it nourished. 60

AARON

And if it please thee? Why, assure thee, Lucius,
'Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak;
For I must talk of murders, rapes, and massacres,
Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
Complots of mischief, treason, villainies 65
Ruthful to hear yet piteously performed,
And this shall all be buried in my death
Unless thou swear to me my child shall live.

LUCIUS

Tell on thy mind. I say thy child shall live.

AARON

Swear that he shall, and then I will begin. 70

LUCIUS

Who should I swear by? Thou believest no god.
That granted, how canst thou believe an oath?

AARON

What if I do not?±±as indeed I do not±±
Yet for I know thou art religious
And hast a thing within thee calleÁd conscience, 75
With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies
Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath; for that I know
An idiot holds his bauble for a god,
And keeps the oath which by that god he swears, 80
To that I'll urge him, therefore thou shalt vow
By that same god, what god soe'er it be,
That thou adorest and hast in reverence,
To save my boy, to nurse and bring him up,
Or else I will discover naught to thee. 85

LUCIUS

Even by my god I swear to thee I will.

AARON

First know thou I begot him on the Empress.

LUCIUS

O most insatiate and luxurious woman!

AARON

Tut, Lucius, this was but a deed of charity
To that which thou shalt hear of me anon. 90
'Twas her two sons that murdered Bassianus.
They cut thy sister's tongue, and ravished her,

And cut her hands, and trimmed her as thou sawest.

LUCIUS
O detestable villain! Call'st thou that trimming?

AARON
Why, she was washed and cut and trimmed, and 'twas 95
Trim sport for them which had the doing of it.

LUCIUS
O barbarous beastly villains, like thyself!

AARON
Indeed, I was their tutor to instruct them.
That coddling spirit had they from their mother,
As sure a card as ever won the set. 100
That bloody mind I think they learned of me,
As true a dog as ever fought at head.
Well, let my deeds be witness of my worth.
I trained thy brethren to that guileful hole
Where the dead corpse of Bassianus lay. 105
I wrote the letter that thy father found,
And hid the gold within that letter mentioned,
Confederate with the Queen and her two sons;
And what not done that thou hast cause to rue
Wherein I had no stroke of mischief in it? 110
I played the cheater for thy father's hand,
And when I had it drew myself apart,
And almost broke my heart with extreme laughter.
I pried me through the crevice of a wall
When for his hand he had his two sons' heads, 115
Beheld his tears, and laughed so heartily
That both mine eyes were rainy like to his;
And when I told the Empress of this sport
She swooned almost at my pleasing tale,
And for my tidings gave me twenty kisses. 120

A GOTH
What, canst thou say all this and never blush?

AARON
Ay, like a black dog, as the saying is.

LUCIUS
Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?

AARON
Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
Even now I curse the day and yet I think 125

Few come within the compass of my curse±±
Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
As kill a man, or else devise his death;
Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it;
Accuse some innocent and forswear myself; 130
Set deadly enmity between two friends;
Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves 135
And set them upright at their dear friends' door,
Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carveÁd in Roman letters
`Let not your sorrow die though I am dead.' 140
But I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

LUCIUS

Bring down the devil, for he must not die 145
So sweet a death as hanging presently.
Goths bring Aaron down the ladder

AARON

If there be devils, would I were a devil,
To live and burn in everlasting fire,
So I might have your company in hell
But to torment you with my bitter tongue. 150

LUCIUS

Sirs, stop his mouth, and let him speak no more.
Goths gag Aaron.
Enter Aemilius

A GOTH

My lord, there is a messenger from Rome
Desires to be admitted to your presence.

LUCIUS Let him come near.

Welcome, Aemilius. What's the news from Rome? 155

AEMILIUS

Lord Lucius, and you princes of the Goths,
The Roman Emperor greets you all by me,

And for he understands you are in arms,
He craves a parley at your father's house,
Willing you to demand your hostages, 160
And they shall be immediately delivered.

A GOTH What says our general?

LUCIUS

Aemilius, let the Emperor give his pledges
Unto my father and my uncle Marcus,
And we will come. Away! 165

[Flourish.] Exeunt [marching]