

# Antony and Cleopatra

## 2.2

*Enter Enobarbus and Lepidus*

**LEPIDUS**

Good Enobarbus, 'tis a worthy deed,  
And shall become you well, to entreat your captain  
To soft and gentle speech.

**ENOBARBUS**

I shall entreat him  
To answer like himself. If Caesar move him,  
Let Antony look over Caesar's head  
And speak as loud as Mars. By Jupiter,  
Were I the wearer of Antonio's beard  
I would not shave't today.

5

**LEPIDUS**

'Tis not a time  
For private stomaching.

**ENOBARBUS**

Every time  
Serves for the matter that is then born in't.

10

**LEPIDUS**

But small to greater matters must give way.

**ENOBARBUS**

Not if the small come first.

**LEPIDUS**

Your speech is passion.  
But pray you, stir no embers up. Here comes  
The noble Antony.

*Enter at one door Antony and Ventidius*

**ENOBARBUS**

And yonder Caesar.

*Enter at another door Caesar, Maecenas, and  
Agrippa*

**ANTONY** *(to Ventidius)*

If we compose well here, to Parthia.  
Hark, Ventidius.

15

**CAESAR**

I do not know,  
Maecenas; ask Agrippa.

**LEPIDUS** *(to Caesar and Antony)*

Noble friends,  
That which combined us was most great; and let not  
A leaner action rend us. What's amiss,  
May it be gently heard. When we debate  
Our trivial difference loud, we do commit

20

Murder in healing wounds. Then, noble partners,  
The rather for I earnestly beseech,  
Touch you the sourest points with sweetest terms,  
Nor curstness grow to th' matter.

**ANTONY** 'Tis spoken well. 25

Were we before our armies, and to fight,  
I should do thus.

*[Antony and Caesar embrace.] Flourish*

**CAESAR** Welcome to Rome.

**ANTONY** Thank you.

**CAESAR** Sit. 30

**ANTONY** Sit, sir.

**CAESAR** Nay then.  
*They sit*

**ANTONY**

I learn you take things ill which are not so,  
Or being, concern you not.

**CAESAR** I must be laughed at

If or for nothing or a little I 35

Should say myself offended, and with you  
Chiefly i'th' world; more laughed at that I should  
Once name you derogately, when to sound your name  
It not concerneÁd me.

**ANTONY**

My being in Egypt, Caesar, what was't to you? 40

**CAESAR**

No more than my residing here at Rome  
Might be to you in Egypt. Yet if you there  
Did practise on my state, your being in Egypt  
Might be my question.

**ANTONY** How intend you `practised'?

**CAESAR**

You may be pleased to catch at mine intent 45  
By what did here befall me. Your wife and brother  
Made wars upon me, and their contestation  
Was theme for you. You were the word of war.

**ANTONY**

You do mistake the business. My brother never  
Did urge me in his act. I did enquire it, 50  
And have my learning from some true reports

That drew their swords with you. Did he not rather  
Discredit my authority with yours,  
And make the wars alike against my stomach,  
Having alike your cause? Of this, my letters 55  
Before did satisfy you. If you'll patch a quarrel,  
As matter whole you have to make it with,  
It must not be with this.

**CAESAR** You praise yourself  
By laying defects of judgement to me, but  
You patched up your excuses.

**ANTONY** Not so, not so. 60  
I know you could not lack, I am certain on't,  
Very necessity of this thought, that I,  
Your partner in the cause 'gainst which he fought,  
Could not with graceful eyes attend those wars  
Which fronted mine own peace. As for my wife, 65  
I would you had her spirit in such another.  
The third o'th' world is yours, which with a snaffle  
You may pace easy, but not such a wife.

**ENOBARBUS** Would we had all such wives, that the men  
might go to wars with the women. 70

**ANTONY**  
So much uncurbable, her garboils, Caesar,  
Made out of her impatience±±which not wanted  
Shrewdness of policy too±±I grieving grant  
Did you too much disquiet, for that you must  
But say I could not help it.

**CAESAR** I wrote to you 75  
When, rioting in Alexandria, you  
Did pocket up my letters, and with taunts  
Did gibe my missive out of audience.

**ANTONY**  
Sir, he fell upon me ere admitted, then.  
Three kings I had newly feasted, and did want 80  
Of what I was i'th' morning; but next day  
I told him of myself, which was as much  
As to have asked him pardon. Let this fellow  
Be nothing of our strife. If we contend,  
Out of our question wipe him.

**CAESAR** You have broken 85

The article of your oath, which you shall never  
Have tongue to charge me with.

**LEPIDUS** Soft, Caesar.

**ANTONY** No, Lepidus, let him speak.

The honour is sacred which he talks on now, 90  
Supposing that I lacked it. But on, Caesar:  
The article of my oath±±

**CAESAR**

To lend me arms and aid when I required them,  
The which you both denied.

**ANTONY** Neglected, rather,  
And then when poisoned hours had bound me up 95  
From mine own knowledge. As nearly as I may  
I'll play the penitent to you, but mine honesty  
Shall not make poor my greatness, nor my power  
Work without it. Truth is that Fulvia,  
To have me out of Egypt, made wars here, 100  
For which myself, the ignorant motive, do  
So far ask pardon as befits mine honour  
To stoop in such a case.

**LEPIDUS** 'Tis noble spoken.

**MAECENAS**

If it might please you to enforce no further  
The griefs between ye; to forget them quite 105  
Were to remember that the present need  
Speaks to atone you.

**LEPIDUS** Worthily spoken, Maecenas.

**ENOBARBUS** Or if you borrow one another's love for the  
instant, you may, when you hear no more words of  
Pompey, return it again. You shall have time to wrangle 110  
in when you have nothing else to do.

**ANTONY**

Thou art a soldier only. Speak no more.

**ENOBARBUS** That truth should be silent I had almost forgot.

**ANTONY**

You wrong this presence, therefore speak no more.

**ENOBARBUS** Go to, then; your considerate stone. 115

**CAESAR**

I do not much dislike the matter, but  
The manner of his speech, for't cannot be

We shall remain in friendship, our conditions  
So differing in their acts. Yet if I knew  
What hoop should hold us staunch, from edge to edge 120  
O'th' world I would pursue it.

**AGRIPPA** Give me leave, Caesar.

**CAESAR** Speak, Agrippa.

**AGRIPPA**

Thou hast a sister by the mother's side,  
Admired Octavia. Great Mark Antony 125  
Is now a widower.

**CAESAR** Say not so, Agrippa.  
If Cleopatra heard you, your reproof  
Were well deserved of rashness.

**ANTONY**

I am not married, Caesar. Let me hear  
Agrippa further speak. 130

**AGRIPPA**

To hold you in perpetual amity,  
To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts  
With an unslipping knot, take Antony  
Octavia to his wife; whose beauty claims  
No worse a husband than the best of men; 135  
Whose virtue and whose general graces speak  
That which none else can utter. By this marriage  
All little jealousies which now seem great,  
And all great fears which now import their dangers,  
Would then be nothing. Truths would be tales 140  
Where now half-tales be truths. Her love to both  
Would each to other and all loves to both  
Draw after her. Pardon what I have spoke,  
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,  
By duty ruminated.

**ANTONY** Will Caesar speak? 145

**CAESAR**

Not till he hears how Antony is touched  
With what is spoke already.

**ANTONY** What power is in Agrippa,  
If I would say `Agrippa, be it so',  
To make this good?

**CAESAR** The power of Caesar, 150

And his power unto Octavia.

**ANTONY** May I never  
 To this good purpose, that so fairly shows,  
 Dream of impediment! Let me have thy hand.  
 Further this act of grace, and from this hour  
 The heart of brothers govern in our loves 155  
 And sway our great designs.

**CAESAR** There's my hand.  
*Antony and Caesar clasp hands*  
 A sister I bequeath you whom no brother  
 Did ever love so dearly. Let her live  
 To join our kingdoms and our hearts; and never  
 Fly off our loves again.

**LEPIDUS** Happily, amen. 160

**ANTONY**  
 I did not think to draw my sword 'gainst Pompey,  
 For he hath laid strange courtesies and great  
 Of late upon me. I must thank him only,  
 Lest my remembrance suffer ill report;  
 At heel of that, defy him.

**LEPIDUS** Time calls upon's. 165  
 Of us must Pompey presently be sought,  
 Or else he seeks out us.

**ANTONY** Where lies he?

**CAESAR**  
 About the Mount Misena.

**ANTONY** What is his strength  
 By land?

**CAESAR** Great and increasing, but by sea  
 He is an absolute master.

**ANTONY** So is the fame. 170  
 Would we had spoke together. Haste we for it;  
 Yet ere we put ourselves in arms, dispatch we  
 The business we have talked of.

**CAESAR** With most gladness,  
 And do invite you to my sister's view,  
 Whither straight I'll lead you.

**ANTONY** Let us, Lepidus, 175  
 Not lack your company.

**LEPIDUS** Noble Antony,

Not sickness should detain me.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but Enobarbus, Agrippa,  
and Maecenas*

**MAECENAS** (to *Enobarbus*) Welcome from Egypt, sir.

**ENOBARBUS** Half the heart of Caesar, worthy Maecenas!  
My honourable friend, Agrippa! 180

**AGRIPPA** Good Enobarbus!

**MAECENAS** We have cause to be glad that matters are so  
well digested. You stayed well by't in Egypt.

**ENOBARBUS** Ay, sir, we did sleep day out of countenance,  
and made the night light with drinking. 185

**MAECENAS** Eight wild boars roasted whole at a breakfast  
and but twelve persons there±±is this true?

**ENOBARBUS** This was but as a fly by an eagle. We had  
much more monstrous matter of feast, which worthily  
deserved noting. 190

**MAECENAS** She's a most triumphant lady, if report be  
square to her.

**ENOBARBUS** When she first met Mark Antony, she pursed  
up his heart upon the river of Cydnus.

**AGRIPPA** There she appeared indeed, or my reporter 195  
devised well for her.

**ENOBARBUS** I will tell you.

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne  
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfumeÁd that 200  
The winds were love-sick with them. The oars were  
silver,

Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
It beggared all description. She did lie 205

In her pavilion±±cloth of gold, of tissue±±  
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature. On each side her  
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,  
With divers-coloured fans whose wind did seem  
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,  
And what they undid did.

**AGRIPPA** O, rare for Antony!

**ENOBARBUS**

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,  
So many mermaids, tended her i'th' eyes,  
And made their bends adornings. At the helm 215  
A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle  
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands  
That yarely frame the office. From the barge  
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense  
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast 220  
Her people out upon her, and Antony,  
Enthroned i'th' market-place, did sit alone,  
Whistling to th'air, which but for vacancy  
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,  
And made a gap in nature.

**AGRIPPA**

Rare Egyptian!

225

**ENOBARBUS**

Upon her landing Antony sent to her,  
Invited her to supper. She replied  
It should be better he became her guest,  
Which she entreated. Our courteous Antony,  
Whom ne'er the word of 'No' woman heard speak, 230  
Being barbered ten times o'er, goes to the feast,  
And for his ordinary pays his heart  
For what his eyes eat only.

**AGRIPPA**

Royal wench!

She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed.  
He ploughed her, and she cropped.

**ENOBARBUS**

I saw her once

235

Hop forty paces through the public street,  
And having lost her breath, she spoke and panted,  
That she did make defect perfection,  
And breathless, pour breath forth.

**MAECENAS**

Now Antony

Must leave her utterly.

**ENOBARBUS**

Never. He will not.

240

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things  
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests 245



Bless her when she is riggish.

**MAECENAS**

If beauty, wisdom, modesty can settle  
The heart of Antony, Octavia is  
A blesseÁd lottery to him.

**AGRIPPA**

Let us go.

Good Enobarbus, make yourself my guest  
Whilst you abide here.

250

**ENOBARBUS**

Humbly, sir, I thank you.

*Exeunt*