

Timon of Athens

3.6

Enter three Senators at one door

FIRST SENATOR

My lords, you have my voice to't. The fault's bloody.

'Tis necessary he should die.

Nothing emboldens sin so much as mercy.

SECOND SENATOR Most true; the law shall bruise 'im.

[Enter Alcibiades at another door, with attendants]

ALCIBIADES

Honour, health, and compassion to the senate!

5

FIRST SENATOR Now, captain.

ALCIBIADES

I am an humble suitor to your virtues;

For pity is the virtue of the law,

And none but tyrants use it cruelly.

It pleases time and fortune to lie heavy 10

Upon a friend of mine, who in hot blood

Hath stepped into the law, which is past depth

To those that without heed do plunge into't.

He is a man, setting his feat aside,

Of comely virtues; 15

Nor did he soil the fact with cowardice±±

An honour in him which buys out his fault±±

But with a noble fury and fair spirit,

Seeing his reputation touched to death,

He did oppose his foe; 20

And with such sober and unnoted passion

He did behave his anger, ere 'twas spent,

As if he had but proved an argument.

FIRST SENATOR

You undergo too strict a paradox,

Striving to make an ugly deed look fair. 25

Your words have took such pains as if they laboured

To bring manslaughter into form, and set quarrelling

Upon the head of valour±±which indeed

Is valour misbegot, and came into the world

When sects and factions were newly born. 30

He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
The worst that man can breathe, and make his
 wrongs his outsides
To wear them like his raiment carelessly,
And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart
To bring it into danger. 35
If wrongs be evils and enforce us kill,
What folly 'tis to hazard life for ill!

ALCIBIADES

FIRST SENATOR You cannot make gross sins look clear.
To revenge is no valour, but to bear.

ALCIBIADES

SECOND SENATOR You breathe in vain.

ALCIBIADES

FIRST SENATOR

ALCIBIADES Why, I say, my lords, he's done fair service,

And slain in fight many of your enemies.
How full of valour did he bear himself
In the last conflict, and made plenteous wounds!

SECOND SENATOR

He has made too much plenty with 'em. 65
He's a sworn rioter; he has a sin
That often drowns him and takes his valour prisoner.
If there were no foes, that were enough
To overcome him. In that beastly fury
He has been known to commit outrages 70
And cherish factions. 'Tis inferred to us
His days are foul and his drink dangerous.

FIRST SENATOR

He dies.

ALCIBIADES Hard fate! He might have died in war.

My lords, if not for any parts in him±±
Though his right arm might purchase his own time 75
And be in debt to none±±yet more to move you,
Take my deserts to his and join 'em both.
And for I know
Your reverend ages love security,
I'll pawn my victories, all my honour to you 80
Upon his good returns.
If by this crime he owes the law his life,
Why, let the war receive't in valiant gore,
For law is strict, and war is nothing more.

FIRST SENATOR

We are for law; he dies. Urge it no more, 85
On height of our displeasure. Friend or brother,
He forfeits his own blood that spills another.

ALCIBIADES

Must it be so? It must not be.
My lords, I do beseech you know me.

SECOND SENATOR

How?

ALCIBIADES

Call me to your remembrances.

THIRD SENATOR

What?

90

ALCIBIADES

I cannot think but your age has forgot me.
It could not else be I should prove so base
To sue and be denied such common grace.

My wounds ache at you.

FIRST SENATOR Do you dare our anger?

'Tis in few words, but spacious in effect: 95

We banish thee for ever.

ALCIBIADES Banish me?

Banish your dotage, banish usury

That makes the senate ugly.

FIRST SENATOR If after two days' shine

Athens contain thee, attend our weightier judgement;

And, not to swell your spirit, he shall be 100

Executed presently.

Exeunt Senators [and attendants]

ALCIBIADES

Now the gods keep you old enough that you may live

Only in bone, that none may look on you!

I'm worse than mad. I have kept back their foes

While they have told their money and let out 105

Their coin upon large interest±±I myself,

Rich only in large hurts. All those for this?

Is this the balsam that the usuring senate

Pours into captains' wounds? Banishment!

It comes not ill; I hate not to be banished. 110

It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,

That I may strike at Athens. I'll cheer up

My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.

'Tis honour with most lands to be at odds.

Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods. 115

Exit