

Timon of Athens

5.2

Enter Flavius and two Senators

FLAVIUS

It is in vain that you would speak with Timon,
For he is set so only to himself
That nothing but himself which looks like man
Is friendly with him.

FIRST SENATOR Bring us to his cave.

It is our part and promise to th' Athenians
To speak with Timon. 5

SECOND SENATOR At all times alike

Men are not still the same. 'Twas time and griefs
That framed him thus. Time with his fairer hand
Offering the fortunes of his former days,
The former man may make him. Bring us to him,
And chance it as it may. 10

FLAVIUS Here is his cave.±±

(Calling) Peace and content be here! Lord Timon,
Timon,

Look out and speak to friends. Th'Athenians
By two of their most reverend senate greet thee.
Speak to them, noble Timon. 15

Enter Timon out of his cave

TIMON

Thou sun that comforts, burn! Speak and be hanged.
For each true word a blister, and each false
Be as a cantherizing to the root o'th' tongue,
Consuming it with speaking.

FIRST SENATOR Worthy Timon±±

TIMON

Of none but such as you, and you of Timon. 20

FIRST SENATOR

The senators of Athens greet thee, Timon.

TIMON

I thank them, and would send them back the plague
Could I but catch it for them.

FIRST SENATOR

O, forget

What we are sorry for, ourselves in thee.
 The senators with one consent of love 25
 Entreat thee back to Athens, who have thought
 On special dignities which vacant lie
 For thy best use and wearing.

SECOND SENATOR They confess
 Toward thee forgetfulness too general-gross,
 Which now the public body, which doth seldom 30
 Play the recanter, feeling in itself
 A lack of Timon's aid, hath sense withal
 Of it own fail, restraining aid to Timon;
 And send forth us to make their sorrowed render,
 Together with a recompense more fruitful 35
 Than their offence can weigh down by the dram;
 Ay, even such heaps and sums of love and wealth
 As shall to thee blot out what wrongs were theirs,
 And write in thee the figures of their love,
 Ever to read them thine.

TIMON You witch me in it, 40
 Surprise me to the very brink of tears.
 Lend me a fool's heart and a woman's eyes,
 And I'll bewEEP these comforts, worthy senators.

FIRST SENATOR
 Therefore so please thee to return with us,
 And of our Athens, thine and ours, to take 45
 The captainship, thou shalt be met with thanks,
 Allowed with absolute power, and thy good name
 Live with authority. So soon we shall drive back
 Of Alcibiades th'approaches wild,
 Who, like a boar too savage, doth root up 50
 His country's peace.

SECOND SENATOR And shakes his threat'ning sword
 Against the walls of Athens.

FIRST SENATOR Therefore, Timon±±

TIMON
 Well, sir, I will; therefore I will, sir, thus.
 If Alcibiades kill my countrymen,
 Let Alcibiades know this of Timon: 55
 That Timon cares not. But if he sack fair Athens,
 And take our goodly age—d men by th' beards,

Giving our holy virgins to the stain
Of contumelious, beastly, mad-brained war,
Then let him know, and tell him Timon speaks it
In pity of our age—And our youth,
I cannot choose but tell him that I care not;
And—let him take't at worst—for their knives care
not

60

While you have throats to answer. For myself,
There's not a whittle in th' unruly camp
But I do prize it at my love before
The reverend'st throat in Athens. So I leave you
To the protection of the prosperous gods,
As thieves to keepers.

65

FLAVIUS (to Senators) Stay not; all's in vain.

TIMON

Why, I was writing of my epitaph.
It will be seen tomorrow. My long sickness
Of health and living now begins to mend,
And nothing brings me all things. Go; live still.
Be Alcibiades your plague, you his,
And last so long enough.

70

FIRST SENATOR We speak in vain.

75

TIMON

But yet I love my country, and am not
One that rejoices in the common wrack
As common bruit doth put it.

FIRST SENATOR That's well spoke.

TIMON

Commend me to my loving countrymen—

FIRST SENATOR

These words become your lips as they pass through
them.

80

SECOND SENATOR

And enter in our ears like great triumphers
In their applauding gates.

TIMON

Commend me to them,

And tell them that to ease them of their griefs,
Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,
Their pangs of love, with other incident throes
That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain

85

In life's uncertain voyage, I will some kindness do them.
I'll teach them to prevent wild Alcibiades' wrath.

FIRST SENATOR (*aside*)

I like this well; he will return again.

TIMON

I have a tree which grows here in my close 90
That mine own use invites me to cut down,
And shortly must I fell it. Tell my friends,
Tell Athens, in the sequence of degree
From high to low throughout, that whoso please
To stop affliction, let him take his haste, 95
Come hither ere my tree hath felt the axe,
And hang himself. I pray you do my greeting.

FLAVIUS (*to Senators*)

Trouble him no further. Thus you still shall find him.

TIMON

Come not to me again, but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion 100
Upon the beacheÁd verge of the salt flood,
Who once a day with his embosseÁd froth
The turbulent surge shall cover. Thither come,
And let my gravestone be your oracle.
Lips, let four words go by, and language end. 105
What is amiss, plague and infection mend.
Graves only be men's works, and death their gain.
Sun, hide thy beams. Timon hath done his reign.

Exit [into his cave]

FIRST SENATOR

His discontents are unremovably
Coupled to nature. 110

SECOND SENATOR

Our hope in him is dead. Let us return,
And strain what other means is left unto us
In our dear peril.

FIRST SENATOR It requires swift foot.

Exeunt