

Titus Andronicus

3.2

A banquet. Enter Titus Andronicus, Marcus, Lavinia, and the boy (young Lucius)

TITUS

So, so, now sit, and look you eat no more
Than will preserve just so much strength in us
As will revenge these bitter woes of ours.

[They sit]

Marcus, unknit that sorrow-wreathen knot.
Thy niece and I, poor creatures, want our hands, 5
And cannot passionate our tenfold grief
With folded arms. This poor right hand of mine
Is left to tyrannize upon my breast,
Who, when my heart, all mad with misery,
Beats in this hollow prison of my flesh, 10
Then thus I thump it down.

He beats his breast

(To Lavinia) Thou map of woe, that thus dost talk in
signs,

When thy poor heart beats with outrageous beating
Thou canst not strike it thus to make it still!
Wound it with sighing, girl; kill it with groans, 15
Or get some little knife between thy teeth
And just against thy heart make thou a hole,
That all the tears that thy poor eyes let fall
May run into that sink and, soaking in,
Drown the lamenting fool in sea-salt tears. 20

MARCUS

Fie, brother, fie! Teach her not thus to lay
Such violent hands upon her tender life.

TITUS

How now! Has sorrow made thee dote already?
Why, Marcus, no man should be mad but I.
What violent hands can she lay on her life? 25
Ah, wherefore dost thou urge the name of hands
To bid Aeneas tell the tale twice o'er
How Troy was burnt and he made miserable?

O, handle not the theme, to talk of hands,
 Lest we remember still that we have none. 30
 Fie, fie, how frantically I square my talk,
 As if we should forget we had no hands
 If Marcus did not name the word of hands!
 Come, let's fall to; and, gentle girl, eat this.
 Here is no drink! Hark, Marcus, what she says. 35
 I can interpret all her martyred signs.
 She says she drinks no other drink but tears,
 Brewed with her sorrow, mashed upon her cheeks.
 Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought.
 In thy dumb action will I be as perfect 40
 As begging hermits in their holy prayers.
 Thou shalt not sigh, nor hold thy stumps to heaven,
 Nor wink, nor nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign,
 But I of these will wrest an alphabet,
 And by still practice learn to know thy meaning. 45

YOUNG LUCIUS
 Good grandsire, leave these bitter deep laments.
 Make my aunt merry with some pleasing tale.

MARCUS
 Alas, the tender boy in passion moved
 Doth weep to see his grandsire's heaviness.

TITUS
 Peace, tender sapling, thou art made of tears, 50
 And tears will quickly melt thy life away.
Marcus strikes the dish with a knife
 What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?

MARCUS
 At that that I have killed, my lord±±a fly.

TITUS
 Out on thee, murderer! Thou kill'st my heart.
 Mine eyes are cloyed with view of tyranny. 55
 A deed of death done on the innocent
 Becomes not Titus' brother. Get thee gone.
 I see thou art not for my company.

MARCUS
 Alas, my lord, I have but killed a fly.

TITUS
 `But'? How if that fly had a father, brother? 60
 How would he hang his slender gilded wings

And buzz lamenting dirges in the air!
Poor harmless fly,
That with his pretty buzzing melody
Came here to make us merry±±and thou hast killed
him! 65

MARCUS

Pardon me, sir, it was a black ill-favoured fly,
Like to the Empress' Moor. Therefore I killed him.

TITUS O, O, O!

Then pardon me for reprehending thee,
For thou hast done a charitable deed. 70
Give me thy knife. I will insult on him,
Flattering myself as if it were the Moor
Come hither purposely to poison me.

He takes a knife and strikes

There's for thyself, and that's for Tamora. Ah, sirrah!
Yet I think we are not brought so low 75
But that between us we can kill a fly
That comes in likeness of a coal-black Moor.

MARCUS

Alas, poor man! Grief has so wrought on him
He takes false shadows for true substances.

TITUS

Come, take away. Lavinia, go with me. 80
I'll to thy closet and go read with thee
Sad stories chanceÁd in the times of old.
Come, boy, and go with me. Thy sight is young,
And thou shalt read when mine begin to dazzle.

Exeunt