

Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus Act III



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SCENE I. Rome. A street.

[Enter Judges, Senators and Tribunes, with MARTIUS and QUINTUS, bound, passing on to the place of execution; TITUS going before, pleading]

Titus Andronicus. Hear me, grave fathers! noble tribunes, stay!

For pity of mine age, whose youth was spent
In dangerous wars, whilst you securely slept;
For all my blood in Rome's great quarrel shed;
For all the frosty nights that I have watch'd;
And for these bitter tears, which now you see
Filling the aged wrinkles in my cheeks;
Be pitiful to my condemned sons,
Whose souls are not corrupted as 'tis thought.

For two and twenty sons I never wept,
Because they died in honour's lofty bed.

[Lieth down; the Judges, & c., pass by him, and Exeunt]

For these, these, tribunes, in the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears:
Let my tears stanch the earth's dry appetite;
My sons' sweet blood will make it shame and blush.

O earth, I will befriend thee more with rain,
That shall distil from these two ancient urns,
Than youthful April shall with all his showers:
In summer's drought I'll drop upon thee still;
In winter with warm tears I'll melt the snow
And keep eternal spring-time on thy face,
So thou refuse to drink my dear sons' blood.

[Enter LUCIUS, with his sword drawn]

O reverend tribunes! O gentle, aged men!
Unbind my sons, reverse the doom of death;
And let me say, that never wept before,
My tears are now prevailing orators.

Lucius. O noble father, you lament in vain:
The tribunes hear you not; no man is by;
And you recount your sorrows to a stone.

Titus Andronicus. Ah, Lucius, for thy brothers let me plead.
Grave tribunes, once more I entreat of you,--

Titus Andronicus

Lucius. My gracious lord, no tribune hears you speak.

Titus Andronicus. Why, tis no matter, man; if they did hear,
They would not mark me, or if they did mark,
They would not pity me, yet plead I must;
Therefore I tell my sorrows to the stones;
Who, though they cannot answer my distress,
Yet in some sort they are better than the tribunes,
For that they will not intercept my tale:
When I do weep, they humbly at my feet
Receive my tears and seem to weep with me;
And, were they but attired in grave weeds,
Rome could afford no tribune like to these.
A stone is soft as wax,--tribunes more hard than stones;
A stone is silent, and offendeth not,
And tribunes with their tongues doom men to death.
[Rises]
But wherefore stand'st thou with thy weapon drawn?

Lucius. To rescue my two brothers from their death:
For which attempt the judges have pronounced
My everlasting doom of banishment.

Titus Andronicus. O happy man! they have befriended thee.
Why, foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive
That Rome is but a wilderness of tigers?
Tigers must prey, and Rome affords no prey
But me and mine: how happy art thou, then,
From these devourers to be banished!
But who comes with our brother Marcus here?

[Enter MARCUS and LAVINIA]

Marcus Andronicus. Titus, prepare thy aged eyes to weep;
Or, if not so, thy noble heart to break:
I bring consuming sorrow to thine age.

Titus Andronicus. Will it consume me? let me see it, then.

Marcus Andronicus. This was thy daughter.

Titus Andronicus. Why, Marcus, so she is.

Lucius. Ay me, this object kills me!

Titus Andronicus. Faint-hearted boy, arise, and look upon her.
Speak, Lavinia, what accursed hand
Hath made thee handless in thy father's sight?
What fool hath added water to the sea,
Or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy?
My grief was at the height before thou camest,

Titus Andronicus

And now like Nilus, it disdaineth bounds.
Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too;
For they have fought for Rome, and all in vain;
And they have nursed this woe, in feeding life;
In bootless prayer have they been held up,
And they have served me to effectless use:
Now all the service I require of them
Is that the one will help to cut the other.
'Tis well, Lavinia, that thou hast no hands;
For hands, to do Rome service, are but vain.

Lucius. Speak, gentle sister, who hath martyr'd thee?

Marcus Andronicus. O, that delightful engine of her thoughts
That blabb'd them with such pleasing eloquence,
Is torn from forth that pretty hollow cage,
Where, like a sweet melodious bird, it sung
Sweet varied notes, enchanting every ear!

Lucius. O, say thou for her, who hath done this deed?

Marcus Andronicus. O, thus I found her, straying in the park,
Seeking to hide herself, as doth the deer
That hath received some unrecurring wound.

Titus Andronicus. It was my deer; and he that wounded her
Hath hurt me more than had he killed me dead:
For now I stand as one upon a rock
Environed with a wilderness of sea,
Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave,
Expecting ever when some envious surge
Will in his brinish bowels swallow him.
This way to death my wretched sons are gone;
Here stands my other son, a banished man,
And here my brother, weeping at my woes.
But that which gives my soul the greatest spurn,
Is dear Lavinia, dearer than my soul.
Had I but seen thy picture in this plight,
It would have maddened me: what shall I do
Now I behold thy lively body so?
Thou hast no hands, to wipe away thy tears:
Nor tongue, to tell me who hath martyr'd thee:
Thy husband he is dead: and for his death
Thy brothers are condemn'd, and dead by this.
Look, Marcus! ah, son Lucius, look on her!
When I did name her brothers, then fresh tears
Stood on her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gather'd lily almost wither'd.

Marcus Andronicus. Perchance she weeps because they kill'd her husband;
Perchance because she knows them innocent.

Titus Andronicus

Titus Andronicus. If they did kill thy husband, then be joyful
Because the law hath ta'en revenge on them.
No, no, they would not do so foul a deed;
Witness the sorrow that their sister makes.
Gentle Lavinia, let me kiss thy lips.
Or make some sign how I may do thee ease:
Shall thy good uncle, and thy brother Lucius,
And thou, and I, sit round about some fountain,
Looking all downwards to behold our cheeks
How they are stain'd, as meadows, yet not dry,
With miry slime left on them by a flood?
And in the fountain shall we gaze so long
Till the fresh taste be taken from that clearness,
And made a brine-pit with our bitter tears?
Or shall we cut away our hands, like thine?
Or shall we bite our tongues, and in dumb shows
Pass the remainder of our hateful days?
What shall we do? let us, that have our tongues,
Plot some deuce of further misery,
To make us wonder'd at in time to come.

Lucius. Sweet father, cease your tears; for, at your grief,
See how my wretched sister sobs and weeps.

Marcus Andronicus. Patience, dear niece. Good Titus, dry thine eyes.

Titus Andronicus. Ah, Marcus, Marcus! brother, well I wot
Thy napkin cannot drink a tear of mine,
For thou, poor man, hast drown'd it with thine own.

Lucius. Ah, my Lavinia, I will wipe thy cheeks.

Titus Andronicus. Mark, Marcus, mark! I understand her signs:
Had she a tongue to speak, now would she say
That to her brother which I said to thee:
His napkin, with his true tears all bewet,
Can do no service on her sorrowful cheeks.
O, what a sympathy of woe is this,
As far from help as Limbo is from bliss!

[Enter AARON]

Aaron. Titus Andronicus, my lord the emperor
Sends thee this word,--that, if thou love thy sons,
Let Marcus, Lucius, or thyself, old Titus,
Or any one of you, chop off your hand,
And send it to the king: he for the same
Will send thee hither both thy sons alive;
And that shall be the ransom for their fault.

Titus Andronicus

Titus Andronicus. O gracious emperor! O gentle Aaron!
Did ever raven sing so like a lark,
That gives sweet tidings of the sun's uprise?
With all my heart, I'll send the emperor My hand:
Good Aaron, wilt thou help to chop it off?

Lucius Stay, father! for that noble hand of thine,
That hath thrown down so many enemies,
Shall not be sent: my hand will serve the turn:
My youth can better spare my blood than you;
And therefore mine shall save my brothers' lives.

Marcus Andronicus. Which of your hands hath not defended Rome,
And rear'd aloft the bloody battle-axe,
Writing destruction on the enemy's castle?
O, none of both but are of high desert:
My hand hath been but idle; let it serve
To ransom my two nephews from their death;
Then have I kept it to a worthy end.

Aaron. Nay, come, agree whose hand shall go along,
For fear they die before their pardon come.

Marcus Andronicus. My hand shall go.

Lucius. By heaven, it shall not go!

Titus Andronicus. Sirs, strive no more: such wither'd herbs as these
Are meet for plucking up, and therefore mine.

Lucius. Sweet father, if I shall be thought thy son,
Let me redeem my brothers both from death.

Marcus Andronicus. And, for our father's sake and mother's care,
Now let me show a brother's love to thee.

Titus Andronicus. Agree between you; I will spare my hand.

Lucius. Then I'll go fetch an axe.

Marcus Andronicus. But I will use the axe.
[Exeunt LUCIUS and MARCUS]

Titus Andronicus. Come hither, Aaron; I'll deceive them both:
Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine.

Aaron. *[Aside]* If that be call'd deceit, I will be honest,
And never, whilst I live, deceive men so:
But I'll deceive you in another sort,
And that you'll say, ere half an hour pass.
[Cuts off TITUS's hand]

Titus Andronicus

[Re-enter LUCIUS and MARCUS]

Titus Andronicus. Now stay your strife: what shall be is dispatch'd.

Good Aaron, give his majesty my hand:
Tell him it was a hand that warded him
From thousand dangers; bid him bury it
More hath it merited; that let it have.
As for my sons, say I account of them
As jewels purchased at an easy price;
And yet dear too, because I bought mine own.

Aaron. I go, Andronicus: and for thy hand
Look by and by to have thy sons with thee.

[Aside]

Their heads, I mean. O, how this villany
Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it!
Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace.
Aaron will have his soul black like his face.

[Exit]

Titus Andronicus. O, here I lift this one hand up to heaven,
And bow this feeble ruin to the earth:

If any power pities wretched tears,
To that I call!

[To LAVINIA]

What, wilt thou kneel with me?
Do, then, dear heart; for heaven shall hear our prayers;
Or with our sighs we'll breathe the welkin dim,
And stain the sun with fog, as sometime clouds
When they do hug him in their melting bosoms.

Marcus Andronicus. O brother, speak with possibilities,
And do not break into these deep extremes.

Titus Andronicus. Is not my sorrow deep, having no bottom?
Then be my passions bottomless with them.

Marcus Andronicus. But yet let reason govern thy lament.

Titus Andronicus. If there were reason for these miseries,
Then into limits could I bind my woes:
When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth o'erflow?
If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad,
Threatening the welkin with his big-swoln face?
And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?
I am the sea; hark, how her sighs do blow!
She is the weeping welkin, I the earth:
Then must my sea be moved with her sighs;
Then must my earth with her continual tears
Become a deluge, overflow'd and drown'd;

Titus Andronicus

For why my bowels cannot hide her woes,
But like a drunkard must I vomit them.
Then give me leave, for losers will have leave
To ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

[Enter a Messenger, with two heads and a hand]

Messenger. Worthy Andronicus, ill art thou repaid
For that good hand thou sent'st the emperor.
Here are the heads of thy two noble sons;
And here's thy hand, in scorn to thee sent back;
Thy griefs their sports, thy resolution mock'd;
That woe is me to think upon thy woes
More than remembrance of my father's death.
[Exit]

Marcus Andronicus. Now let hot Aetna cool in Sicily,
And be my heart an ever-burning hell!
These miseries are more than may be borne.
To weep with them that weep doth ease some deal;
But sorrow flouted at is double death.

Lucius. Ah, that this sight should make so deep a wound,
And yet detested life not shrink thereat!
That ever death should let life bear his name,
Where life hath no more interest but to breathe!
[LAVINIA kisses TITUS]

Marcus Andronicus. Alas, poor heart, that kiss is comfortless
As frozen water to a starved snake.

Titus Andronicus. When will this fearful slumber have an end?

Marcus Andronicus. Now, farewell, flattery: die, Andronicus;
Thou dost not slumber: see, thy two sons' heads,
Thy warlike hand, thy mangled daughter here:
Thy other banish'd son, with this dear sight
Struck pale and bloodless; and thy brother, I,
Even like a stony image, cold and numb.
Ah, now no more will I control thy griefs:
Rend off thy silver hair, thy other hand
Gnawing with thy teeth; and be this dismal sight
The closing up of our most wretched eyes;
Now is a time to storm; why art thou still?

Titus Andronicus. Ha, ha, ha!

Marcus Andronicus. Why dost thou laugh? it fits not with this hour.

Titus Andronicus. Why, I have not another tear to shed:
Besides, this sorrow is an enemy,

Titus Andronicus

And would usurp upon my watery eyes
And make them blind with tributary tears:
Then which way shall I find Revenge's cave?
For these two heads do seem to speak to me,
And threat me I shall never come to bliss
Till all these mischiefs be return'd again
Even in their throats that have committed them.
Come, let me see what task I have to do.
You heavy people, circle me about,
That I may turn me to each one of you,
And swear unto my soul to right your wrongs.
The vow is made. Come, brother, take a head;
And in this hand the other I will bear.
Lavinia, thou shalt be employ'd: these arms!
Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thy teeth.
As for thee, boy, go get thee from my sight;
Thou art an exile, and thou must not stay:
Hie to the Goths, and raise an army there:
And, if you love me, as I think you do,
Let's kiss and part, for we have much to do.
[Exeunt TITUS, MARCUS, and LAVINIA]

Lucius. Farewell Andronicus, my noble father,
The wofull'st man that ever lived in Rome:
Farewell, proud Rome; till Lucius come again,
He leaves his pledges dearer than his life:
Farewell, Lavinia, my noble sister;
O, would thou wert as thou tofore hast been!
But now nor Lucius nor Lavinia lives
But in oblivion and hateful griefs.
If Lucius live, he will requite your wrongs;
And make proud Saturnine and his empress
Beg at the gates, like Tarquin and his queen.
Now will I to the Goths, and raise a power,
To be revenged on Rome and Saturnine.
[Exit]

SCENE II. A room in Titus's house. A banquet set out.

[Enter TITUS, MARCUS, LAVINIA and Young LUCIUS, a boy]

Titus Andronicus. 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.
Marcus, unknit that sorrow-wreathen knot:
Thy niece and I, poor creatures, want our hands,
And cannot passionate our tenfold grief
With folded arms. This poor right hand of mine
Is left to tyrannize upon my breast;

Titus Andronicus

Who, when my heart, all mad with misery,
Beats in this hollow prison of my flesh,
Then thus I thump it down.

[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;
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.

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

Titus Andronicus. 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?
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.
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;
I can interpret all her martyr'd signs;
She says she drinks no other drink but tears,
Brew'd with her sorrow, mesh'd upon her cheeks:
Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought;
In thy dumb action will I be as perfect
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 practise learn to know thy meaning.

Young Lucius. Good grandsire, leave these bitter deep laments:
Make my aunt merry with some pleasing tale.

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

Titus Andronicus. Peace, tender sapling; thou art made of tears,
And tears will quickly melt thy life away.
[MARCUS strikes the dish with a knife]
What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?

Titus Andronicus

Marcus Andronicus. At that that I have kill'd, my lord; a fly.

Titus Andronicus. Out on thee, murderer! thou kill'st my heart;
Mine eyes are cloy'd with view of tyranny:
A deed of death done on the innocent
Becomes not Titus' brother: get thee gone:
I see thou art not for my company.

Marcus Andronicus. Alas, my lord, I have but kill'd a fly.

Titus Andronicus. But how, if that fly had a father and mother?
How would he hang his slender gilded wings,
And buzz lamenting doings in the air!
Poor harmless fly,
That, with his pretty buzzing melody,
Came here to make us merry! and thou hast
kill'd him.

Marcus Andronicus. Pardon me, sir; it was a black ill-favor'd fly,
Like to the empress' Moor; therefore I kill'd him.

Titus Andronicus. O, O, O,
Then pardon me for reprehending thee,
For thou hast done a charitable deed.
Give me thy knife, I will insult on him;
Flattering myself, as if it were the Moor
Come hither purposely to poison me.--
There's for thyself, and that's for Tamora.
Ah, sirrah!
Yet, I think, we are not brought so low,
But that between us we can kill a fly
That comes in likeness of a coal-black Moor.

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

Titus Andronicus. Come, take away. Lavinia, go with me:
I'll to thy closet; and go read with thee
Sad stories chanced 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]