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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Antony and Cleopatra



♦ COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED ♦

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

William Shakespeare

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藏书章



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INTRODUCTION

ANTONY & CLEOPATRA (1607) is one of Shakespeare's finest achievements and dates from his mature period. It is a tragedy of nobility brought low by enslavement to passion. The magnificently flawed hero and heroine are overcome by their single-minded obsession with each other and this encompasses their downfall.

The play opens in Alexandria, where Antony, a member of the triumvirate which rules the Roman Empire, holds court with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. The very first speech of the play establishes the hold that Cleopatra has over Antony, to the exasperation and despair of Antony's officers, who resent and despise their General's life of sensual pleasure. However, when Antony learns of his wife's death he returns to Rome to join his fellow triumvirs, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, in their campaign against Pompeius Sextus, the son of the great Pompey. To cement their new-found amity, Caesar gives Antony his sister Octavia in marriage, but quarrels between the three rulers break out again, and Antony returns to Cleopatra. Caesar sees this as a grave insult, and in true Roman fashion determines to avenge his own and his family's honour. At a sea battle off Actium in the Ionian Sea, Cleopatra's ship leaves the line of battle just as the fight is swinging in Antony's favour, and he follows her, thereby conceding defeat. He is pursued by Caesar to Alexandria and battle is joined, but when a false report of Cleopatra's death reaches Antony, he falls on his sword. Mortally wounded, he is carried to the Mausoleum to which the Queen of Egypt has retreated, and he dies in Cleopatra's arms. Rather than suffer the indignity of being paraded through Rome as a captive, Cleopatra applies a poisonous snake, an asp, to her breast and dies.

The majesty of the characterization and the poetry of the language show Shakespeare at his finest. The tragedy of the last act is in bitter contrast to the coded eroticism of the first. The abandon, the obsession and the passion of two lovers past their first youth who cast aside the proprieties of the world which they inhabit is fascinating when compared with the juvenile exchanges of the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*. Set off against this are the minor characters, particularly the noble Enobarbus, friend of Antony, and Agrippa, his counterpart in Caesar's train, who provide witty and astute comments on the state of play in the manner of a Greek chorus.

Details of William Shakespeare's early life are scanty. He was the son of a prosperous merchant of Stratford upon Avon, and tradition has it that he was born on 23rd April 1564; records show that he was baptized three days later. It is likely that he attended the local Grammar School, but he had no university education. Of his early career there is no record, though John Aubrey states that he was a country schoolmaster. How he became involved with the stage is equally uncertain, but he was sufficiently established as a playwright by 1592 to be criticized in print. He was a leading member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, which became the King's Men on the accession of James I in 1603. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582, by whom he had two daughters and a son, Hamnet, who died in 1586. Towards the end of his life he loosened his ties with London, and retired to New Place, his substantial property in Stratford which he had bought in 1597. He died on 23rd April 1616 aged 52, and is buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.

Further reading

J Adelman: *The Common Liar: An Essay on 'Antony & Cleopatra'* 1973

P A Cantor: *Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire* 1976

M Charney: *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* 1961

R S Miola: *Shakespeare's Rome* 1983

C T Onions: *A Shakespeare Glossary* 1962



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The scene: the Roman Empire
CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

ANTONY	}	<i>triumvirs</i>
OCTAVIUS CAESAR		
LEPIDUS		
SEXTUS POMPEIUS	}	<i>friends to Antony</i>
DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS		
VENTIDIUS		
EROS		
SCARUS		
DERCETUS		
DEMETRIUS		
PHILO		
MAECENAS	}	<i>friends to Caesar</i>
AGRIPPA		
DOLABELLA		
PROCULEIUS		
THIDIAS		
GALLUS		
MENAS	}	<i>friends to Sextus Pompeius</i>
MENEKRATES		
VARRIUS		
TAURUS, <i>lieutenant-general to Caesar</i>		
CANIDIUS, <i>lieutenant-general to Antony</i>		
SILIUS, <i>an officer in Ventidius's army</i>		
<i>A Schoolmaster, ambassador from Antony to Caesar</i>		
ALEXAS	}	<i>attendants on Cleopatra</i>
MARDIAN, <i>a eunuch</i>		
SELEUCUS		
DIOMEDES		
<i>A Soothsayer</i>		
<i>A Clown</i>		
CLEOPATRA, <i>queen of Egypt</i>		
OCTAVIA, <i>sister to Caesar, and wife to Antony</i>		
CHARMIAN	}	<i>attendants on Cleopatra</i>
IRAS		
<i>Officers, soldiers, messengers, and other attendants</i>		

ANTONY & CLEOPATRA

[1. 1.] *Alexandria. A room in Cleopatra's palace*

Enter DEMETRIUS and PHILO

Philo. Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glowed like plated Mars—now bend, now turn.
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust.

*Flourish. Enter ANTONY, CLEOPATRA, her ladies,
the train, with eunuchs fanning her*

Look where they come:

10

Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transformed
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see.

Cleopatra. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

Antony. There's beggary in the love that can
be reckoned.

Cleopatra. I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.

Antony. Then must thou needs find out new heaven,
new earth.

Enter an Attendant

Attendant. News, my good lord, from Rome.

Antony. Grates me! the sum.

Cleopatra. Nay, hear them, Antony:

- 20 Fulvia perchance is angry; or, who knows
If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you, 'Do this, or this;
Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;
Perform't, or else we damn thee.'

Antony. How, my love?

Cleopatra. Perchance? nay, and most like:

- You must not stay here longer, your dismissal
Is come from Caesar; therefore hear it, Antony.
Where's Fulvia's process? Caesar's I would say? both?
Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen,
30 Thou blushest, Antony, and that blood of thine
Is Caesar's homager: else so thy cheek pays shame
When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers!

Antony. Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life
Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair [embracing
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.

- 40 *Cleopatra.* Excellent falsehood!
Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?
I'll seem the fool I am not; Antony
Will be himself.

Antony. But stirred by Cleopatra.
Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours,
Let's not confound the time with conference harsh:
There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
Without some pleasure new. What sport to-night?

Cleopatra. Hear the ambassadors.

Antony. Fie, wrangling queen!

Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,
 To weep; whose every passion fully strives 50
 To make itself, in thee, fair and admired!
 No messenger but thine, and all alone
 To-night we'll wander through the streets and note
 The qualities of people. Come, my queen;
 Last night you did desire it. [*to the Attendant*] Speak
 not to us.

[*Antony and Cleopatra depart with their train*
Demetrius. Is Caesar with Antonius prized so slight?
Philo. Sir, sometimes, when he is not Antony,
 He comes too short of that great property
 Which still should go with Antony.

Demetrius. I am full sorry
 That he approves the common liar, who 60
 Thus speaks of him at Rome: but I will hope
 Of better deeds to-morrow. Rest you happy! [*they go*]

[1.2.] *The same; some hours later. Servants bearing dishes pass to and from a room beyond, whence a sound of feasting is heard. Presently enter from the feast ENOBARBUS and three other Romans talking with a Soothsayer; and, a little after, Cleopatra's attendants CHARMIAN, IRAS, MARDIAN the Eunuch, and ALEXAS*

Charmian. Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most any thing
 Alexas, almost most absolute Alexas, where's the sooth-
 sayer that you praised so to th'queen? O, that I knew
 this husband, which, you say, must charge his horns
 with garlands!

Alexas. Soothsayer!

Soothsayer. Your will?

Charmian. Is this the man? Is't you, sir, that
 know things?

Soothsayer. In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read.

10 *Alexas.* Show him your hand.

[*she holds it forth*]

Enobarbus. [*to a servant*] Bring in the banquet
quickly; wine enough
Cleopatra's health to drink.

[*servants set fruit, wine, etc. on a table*]

Charmian. Good sir, give me good fortune.

Soothsayer. I make not, but foresee.

Charmian. Pray then, foresee me one.

Soothsayer. You shall be yet far fairer than you are.

Charmian. He means in flesh.

Iras. No, you shall paint when you are old.

Charmian. Wrinkles forbid!

20 *Alexas.* Vex not his prescience, be attentive.

Charmian. Hush!

Soothsayer. You shall be more loving than beloved.

Charmian. I had rather heat my liver with drinking.

Alexas. Nay, hear him.

Charmian. Good now, some excellent fortune! Let me
be married to three kings in a forenoon, and widow
them all: let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod
of Jewry may do homage: find me to marry me with
Octavius Caesar, and companion me with my mistress.

30 *Soothsayer.* You shall outlive the lady whom you serve.

Charmian. O excellent! I love long life better than figs.

Soothsayer. You have seen and proved a fairer
former fortune

Than that which is to approach.

Charmian. Then belike my children shall have no
names: prithee, how many boys and wenches must
I have?

Soothsayer. If every of your wishes had a womb,

And fertile every wish, a million.

Charmian. Out, fool! I forgive thee for a witch.

Alexas. You think none but your sheets are privy to 40
your wishes.

Charmian. Nay, come, tell Iras hers.

Alexas. We'll know all our fortunes.

Enobarbus. Mine and most of our fortunes to-night
shall be—drunk to bed. *[pours out wine]*

Iras. *[holds out her hand]* There's a palm presages
chastity, if nothing else.

Charmian. E'en as the o'erflowing Nilus presageth
famine.

Iras. Go, you wild bedfellow, you cannot soothsay. 50

Charmian. Nay, if an oily palm be not a fruitful
prognostication, I cannot scratch mine ear. Prithee,
tell her but a worky-day fortune.

Soothsayer. Your fortunes are alike.

Iras. But how, but how? give me particulars.

Soothsayer. I have said.

Iras. Am I not an inch of fortune better than she?

Charmian. Well, if you were but an inch of fortune
better than I... where would you choose it?

Iras. Not in my husband's nose.

60

Charmian. Our worser thoughts heavens mend!
Alexas—come, his fortune, his fortune! O, let him
marry a woman that cannot go, sweet Isis, I beseech
thee! and let her die too, and give him a worse! and
let worse follow worse, till the worst of all follow
him laughing to his grave, fifty-fold a cuckold! Good
Isis, hear me this prayer, though thou deny me a
matter of more weight; good Isis, I beseech thee!

Iras. Amen, dear goddess, hear that prayer of thy
people! For, as it is a heart-breaking to see a handsome 70
man loose-wived, so it is a deadly sorrow to behold

a foul knave uncuckolded: therefore, dear Isis, keep decorum, and fortune him accordingly!

Charmian. Amen.

Alexas. Lo, now, if it lay in their hands to make me a cuckold, they would make themselves whores but they'd do't!

Enobarbus. Hush! here comes Antony.

Enter CLEOPATRA

Charmian.

Not he, the queen.

Cleopatra. Saw you my lord?

80 *Enobarbus.* No, lady.

Cleopatra. Was he not here?

Charmian. No, madam.

Cleopatra. He was disposed to mirth, but on the sudden
A Roman thought hath struck him. Enobarbus!

Enobarbus. Madam?

Cleopatra. Seek him, and bring him hither. [*he goes*
Where's Alexas?

Alexas. Here, at your service. My lord approaches.

Enter ANTONY with a Messenger and Attendants

Cleopatra. We will not look upon him: go with us.

[*they leave*

Messenger. Fulvia thy wife first came into the field.

90 *Antony.* Against my brother Lucius?

Messenger. Ay:

But soon that war had end, and the time's state
Made friends of them, jointing their force 'gainst Caesar,
Whose better issue in the war from Italy
Upon the first encounter drave them.

Antony.

Well, what worst?

Messenger. The nature of bad news infects the teller.

Antony. When it concerns the fool or coward. On!
†Things that are past are done. With me, 'tis thus—