

TITUS ANDRONICUS*A line-by-line translation***Act 1, Scene 1****Shakespeare**

The Tomb of the ANDRONICI appearing; the Tribunes and Senators aloft. Enter, below, from one side, SATURNINUS and his Followers; and, from the other side, BASSIANUS and his Followers; with drum and colours

SATURNINUS

Noble patricians, patrons of my right,
Defend the justice of my cause with arms,
And, countrymen, my loving followers,
Plead my successive title with your swords:
I am his first-born son, that was the last
That wore the imperial diadem of Rome;
Then let my father's honours live in me,
Nor wrong mine age with this indignity.

BASSIANUS

Romans, friends, followers, favorers of my right,
If ever Bassianus, Caesar's son,
Were gracious in the eyes of royal Rome,
Keep then this passage to the Capitol
And suffer not dishonour to approach
The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,
To justice, continence and nobility;
But let desert in pure election shine,
And, Romans, fight for freedom in your choice.

Enter MARCUS ANDRONICUS, aloft, with the crown

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Princes, that strive by factions and by friends
Ambitiously for rule and empery,
Know that the people of Rome, for whom we stand
A special party, have, by common voice,
In election for the Roman empery,
Chosen Andronicus, surnamed Pius
For many good and great deserts to Rome:
A nobler man, a braver warrior,
Lives not this day within the city walls:
He by the senate is accit'd home
From weary wars against the barbarous Goths;
That, with his sons, a terror to our foes,
Hath yoked a nation strong, train'd up in arms.
Ten years are spent since first he undertook
This cause of Rome and chastised with arms
Our enemies' pride: five times he hath return'd
Bleeding to Rome, bearing his valiant sons
In coffins from the field;
And now at last, laden with horror's spoils,
Returns the good Andronicus to Rome,
Renowned Titus, flourishing in arms.
Let us entreat, by honour of his name,
Whom worthily you would have now succeed.
And in the Capitol and senate's right,
Whom you pretend to honour and adore,
That you withdraw you and abate your strength;
Dismiss your followers and, as suitors should,
Plead your deserts in peace and humbleness.

SATURNINUS

How fair the tribune speaks to calm my thoughts!

Shakescleare Translation

The scene opens on the tomb of the Andronici family, surrounded by Tribunes ¹ and Senators. SATURNINUS and a crowd of supporters enter from one side; from another side, BASSIANUS and his supporters enter with ceremonial flags and drums.

¹ "Tribune" is the term for an elected official in ancient Rome.

SATURNINUS

Noble patricians ², since you support my right to rule, defend my just cause with weapons. And countrymen, my loyal followers, fight for my inheritance with your swords: I am the first-born son of the last emperor, so let me take the crown and don't make me lower myself to ask for it.

² "Patricians" are the aristocrats or noblemen of Rome.

BASSIANUS

Romans, friends, followers, supporters of my right to rule--if Bassianus, Caesar's son ³, ever had a good reputation in the eyes of royal Rome, then block this man's path. Don't let dishonor approach the imperial throne, where there should be only virtue, justice, restraint, and nobility. Instead, elect someone who deserves it, and Romans, fight for your right to freely choose your own emperor.

³ "Caesar" is the title used by Roman emperors. Bassianus is the second son of the late emperor, and thus Saturninus's brother.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS enters, holding the crown.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Ambitious princes, fighting each other to become emperor! The people of Rome, whom I have been elected to represent, have voted and chosen Andronicus--called "Andronicus Pius" for all his great deeds, since there's no nobler man or braver warrior in all of Rome--as their new emperor. The Senate has summoned him home from the war against the barbaric Goths ⁴. With his sons, he defeated a strong nation that trains its warriors from their birth. It's been ten years since he first went to war and punished our enemies' pride with his weapons; he's come back five times, bearing the dead bodies of his brave sons. And now at last, bringing prizes won during war, the famous Titus Andronicus returns to Rome in triumph. Let us ask you--out of respect for the late emperor, the Capitol, and the Senate, which you claim to honor--that you back down, dismiss your followers, and make your case peacefully and humbly.

⁴ The "Goths" were an East Germanic people who fought a series of wars with Rome in the declining years of the empire.

SATURNINUS

The tribune speaks well, and calms me down.

BASSIANUS

Marcus Andronicus, so I do ally
In thy uprightness and integrity,
And so I love and honour thee and thine,
50 Thy noble brother Titus and his sons,
And her to whom my thoughts are humbled all,
Gracious Lavinia, Rome's rich ornament,
That I will here dismiss my loving friends,
And to my fortunes and the people's favor
55 Commit my cause in balance to be weigh'd.

Exeunt the followers of BASSIANUS

SATURNINUS

Friends, that have been thus forward in my right,
I thank you all and here dismiss you all,
And to the love and favor of my country
Commit myself, my person and the cause.

Exeunt the followers of SATURNINUS

SATURNINUS

60 Rome, be as just and gracious unto me
As I am confident and kind to thee.
Open the gates, and let me in.

BASSIANUS

Tribunes, and me, a poor competitor.

65 *Flourish. SATURNINUS and BASSIANUS go up into the Capitol*

Enter a Captain

CAPTAIN

Romans, make way: the good Andronicus.
Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion,
Successful in the battles that he fights,
With honour and with fortune is return'd
70 From where he circumscribed with his sword,
And brought to yoke, the enemies of Rome.

Drums and trumpets sounded. Enter MARTIUS and MUTIUS; After them, two Men bearing a coffin covered with black; then LUCIUS and QUINTUS. After them, TITUS ANDRONICUS; and then TAMORA, with ALARBUS, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON, AARON, and other Goths, prisoners; Soldiers and people following. The Bearers set down the coffin, and TITUS speaks

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!
Lo, as the bark, that hath discharged her fraught,
Returns with precious jading to the bay
75 From whence at first she weigh'd her anchorage,
Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,
To re-salute his country with his tears,
Tears of true joy for his return to Rome.
Thou great defender of this Capitol,
80 Stand gracious to the rites that we intend!
Romans, of five and twenty valiant sons,
Half of the number that King Priam had,
Behold the poor remains, alive and dead!
These that survive let Rome reward with love;
85 These that I bring unto their latest home,
With burial amongst their ancestors:
Here Goths have given me leave to sheathe my sword.
Titus, unkind and careless of thine own,
Why suffer'st thou thy sons, unburied yet,
90 To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?
Make way to lay them by their brethren.

The tomb is opened

BASSIANUS

Marcus Andronicus, I have much respect for your honesty and integrity. And I have so much love and honor for you and your family--your noble brother Titus and his sons, and lovely Lavinia, the object of my affections--that I will dismiss my followers, and let the people decide my fate.

BASSIANUS's followers exit.

SATURNINUS

Friends and supporters: I thank you and dismiss you all, relying only on the love and respect of my country to judge my cause.

SATURNINUS's followers exit.

SATURNINUS

Rome, be as fair and gracious to me as I've been straightforward and kind to you. Open the gates, and let me in.

BASSIANUS

Tribunes, let me—a poor competitor--in, too.

Sound of trumpets. SATURNINUS and BASSIANUS go up into the Capitol.

A CAPTAIN enters.

CAPTAIN

Romans, make way: the good Andronicus, model of virtue, Rome's best champion, victorious in battle, returns from the wars with honor and good fortune, having defeated and captured our enemies.

Drums and trumpets. MARTIUS and MUTIUS enter; after them, two men carrying a coffin covered with black; then LUCIUS and QUINTUS. After them, TITUS ANDRONICUS; and then TAMORA, with ALARBUS, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON, AARON, and other Goth prisoners; with soldiers and other people following. The men set down the coffin, and TITUS speaks.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Hail Rome, victorious even in your mourning clothes! Like the ship returned home with treasures from abroad, Andronicus comes crowned with laurels of victory, to re-salute his country with tears--tears of true joy--for his return. *Jupiter Capitolinus* ⁵, defender of the city, accept our offering! Romans, these men are all that's left of my twenty-five sons (half the number that King Priam ⁶ had). Look at them! The ones who are still alive deserve your love and gratitude; the ones who are dead I will bury with their ancestors. Here, for once, I'm putting down my sword. Titus, you've been unkind and careless to your own children. Why do you allow your unburied sons to remain on the shores of the Styx? ⁷ Make way, so that I can bury them with their brothers.

⁵ In the original text, Titus refers to Rome's patron god simply as "thou." Jupiter, as king of the gods, was the chief deity for Romans. The most important temple in ancient Rome was situated on Capitoline Hill, was the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus.

⁶ "King Priam" was king of Troy during the Trojan War, and famously had fifty sons (and quite a few daughters, as well).

⁷ The "Styx," in Greek mythology, is the river on the border between earth and the underworld.

The tomb is opened.

There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,
And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars!
O sacred receptacle of my joys,
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,
How many sons of mine hast thou in store,
That thou wilt never render to me more!

LUCIUS

Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile
Ad manes fratrum sacrifice his flesh,
95 Before this earthly prison of their bones;
That so the shadows be not unpeased,
Nor we disturb'd with prodigies on earth.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I give him you, the noblest that survives,
The eldest son of this distressed queen.

TAMORA

100 Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
A mother's tears in passion for her son:
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
O, think my son to be as dear to me!
105 Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome,
To beautify thy triumphs and return,
Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke,
But must my sons be slaughter'd in the streets,
For valiant doings in their country's cause?
110 O, if to fight for king and commonweal
Were piety in thine, it is in these.
Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood:
Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful:
115 Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge:
Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
These are their brethren, whom you Goths beheld
120 Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain
Religiously they ask a sacrifice:
To this your son is mark'd, and die he must,
To appease their groaning shadows that are gone.

LUCIUS

Away with him! and make a fire straight;
And with our swords, upon a pile of wood,
125 Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed.

Exeunt LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS, and MUTIUS, with ALARBUS

TAMORA

O cruel, irreligious piety!

CHIRON

Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?

DEMETRIUS

Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome.
130 Alarbus goes to rest; and we survive
To tremble under Titus' threatening looks.
Then, madam, stand resolved, but hope withal
The self-same gods that arm'd the Queen of Troy
With opportunity of sharp revenge
135 Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent,
May favor Tamora, the Queen of Goths--
When Goths were Goths and Tamora was queen--
To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes.

There you can speak to each other in silence, as the dead do, and sleep in peace, you who died fighting for your country. Oh, sacred home of my children, of virtue and nobility, you have taken so many of my sons but will never return any to me.

LUCIUS

Give us the highest-ranking Goth prisoner, so that we can cut his limbs and for the spirits of our brothers sacrifice him in front of this tomb: that way their spirits will be at rest and they won't haunt us.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I give you the noblest of my prisoners, the eldest son of this defeated queen.

TAMORA

Stop, Roman friends! Gracious conqueror, victorious Titus, pity the tears I shed, for they're a mother's tears for her son. If you ever loved your sons, imagine that I love my son just as much! Isn't it enough that we're brought to Rome, to add to your triumph, as your prisoners? Do you also have to slaughter my sons in the streets, just because they fought to protect their homeland? If your sons were brave to fight for their country, then mine were as well. Andronicus, don't stain your tomb with blood: don't you want to be like a god? Be like a god in being merciful, for sweet mercy is the truest sign of nobility. Noble Titus, let my first-born son live.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Calm yourself, madam, and forgive me. These are their brothers, who you saw alive and dead, and for their dead brothers they ask a religious sacrifice. Your son must die, to satisfy the ghosts of the dead.

LUCIUS

Take him away! And build a fire: let's cut him to pieces with our swords on a pile of wood, until he's consumed by the flames.

LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS, and MUTIUS exit with ALARBUS.

TAMORA

Oh, cruel, irreligious faith!

CHIRON

Were the Scythians ⁸ ever so barbaric?

⁸ The "Scythians" were an ancient Siberian nomadic tribe notorious for their ferocity in battle.

DEMETRIUS

Ambitious Rome is no better than Scythia. Alarbus is dead, and we live only as Titus's prisoners. Then, madam, prepare for death. But don't give up hope that the gods --who gave the Queen of Troy opportunity to take revenge on the Thracian tyrant ⁹ in his tent--might favor Tamora, the Queen of Goths (when you were still queen and we were still Goths, that is) to give them what they deserve.

⁹ The "sharp revenge" mentioned here is that of Hecuba--King Priam's wife and the vanquished queen of Troy. She took revenge on the Greek who murdered her son by stabbing out his eyes.

Re-enter LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS and MUTIUS, with their swords bloody

LUCIUS

See, lord and father, how we have perform'd
Our Roman rites: Alarbus' limbs are lopp'd,
And entrails feed the sacrificing fire,
Whose smoke, like incense, doth perfume the sky.
Remaineth nought, but to inter our brethren,
And with loud 'larums welcome them to Rome.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Let it be so; and let Andronicus
Make this his latest farewell to their souls.

Trumpets sounded, and the coffin laid in the tomb

TITUS ANDRONICUS

In peace and honour rest you here, my sons;
Rome's readiest champions, repose you here in rest,
Secure from worldly chances and mishaps!
Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no damned grudges; here are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep:
In peace and honour rest you here, my sons!

Enter LAVINIA

LAVINIA

155 In peace and honour live Lord Titus long;
My noble lord and father, live in fame!
Lo, at this tomb my tributary tears
I render, for my brethren's obsequies;
And at thy feet I kneel, with tears of joy,
160 Shed on the earth, for thy return to Rome:
O, bless me here with thy victorious hand,
Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Kind Rome, that hast thus lovingly reserved
The cordial of mine age to glad my heart!
165 Lavinia, live; outlive thy father's days,
And fame's eternal date, for virtue's praise!

Enter, below, MARCUS ANDRONICUS and Tribunes; re-enter SATURNINUS and BASSIANUS, attended

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Long live Lord Titus, my beloved brother,
Gracious triumper in the eyes of Rome!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Thanks, gentle tribune, noble brother Marcus.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

170 And welcome, nephews, from successful wars,
You that survive, and you that sleep in fame!
Fair lords, your fortunes are alike in all,
That in your country's service drew your swords:
But safer triumph is this funeral pomp,
175 That hath aspired to Solon's happiness
And triumphs over chance in honour's bed.
Titus Andronicus, the people of Rome,
Whose friend in justice thou hast ever been,
Send thee by me, their tribune and their trust,
180 This pallium of white and spotless hue;
And name thee in election for the empire,
With these our late-deceased emperor's sons:
Be candidatus then, and put it on,
And help to set a head on headless Rome.

LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS and MUTIUS re-enter, with bloody swords.

LUCIUS

See, lord and father, how we've done our Roman sacrifice:
Alarbus's limbs are cut off and his innards feed the fire as
the smoke perfumes the sky. There's nothing else to do but
bury our brothers and welcome them to Rome with
celebration.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Let it be so, but first Andronicus will say a last goodbye to
their souls.

Trumpets sound as the coffin is laid in the tomb.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Rest in peace and honor here, my sons: you were always
ready to serve Rome, so rest here safe from any more
suffering. Here there's no treason, no jealousy, no grudges.
Here are no storms, no noise, but just silence and eternal
sleep: rest in peace and honor here, my sons!

LAVINIA enters.

LAVINIA

Lord Titus, my noble lord and father, may you live forever in
peace, honor, and good reputation! I cry at this tomb for my
brothers, and I kneel at your feet with tears of joy for your
return to Rome. Oh, bless me with your victorious hand,
applauded by Rome's best citizens!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Kind Rome, you have given me this sweet medicine to make
my heart happy again. Lavinia, live: outlive your father, and
may everyone remember your virtue after you're gone.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS and Tribunes enter; SATURNINUS and BASSIANUS re-enter, with servants and followers.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Long live Lord Titus, my beloved brother, gracious victor in
the eyes of Rome!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Thanks, kind tribune, noble brother Marcus.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

And welcome, nephews, from successful wars--both you
who survived and you that died. Lords, everyone who
fought for his country is equal in our eyes. Your dead sons'
funeral is a greater triumph than the happiness we who
survive enjoy, for they have achieved the honor and
security Solon¹⁰ praised. But Titus Andronicus, the people
of Rome--you've always been their friend--have sent me,
their tribune, to give you this white pallium¹¹ and tell
you that they have elected you as their emperor. Be
candidatus¹² with the sons of our late emperor, then, and
put it on, helping to set a head on headless Rome¹³.

¹⁰ The ancient greek philosopher "Solon" taught that no one can be counted secure and happy until death. Those who have had good fortune might yet suffer greatly.

¹¹ A "pallium" is long white robe--in this case, the ceremonial garment of the emperor.

¹² "Candidatus" is Latin for "candidate for Roman office."

¹³ "Headless Rome" means simply that Rome is without a leader, and Titus must take on that role. Notice, though, how many times severed body parts have been mentioned in

TITUS ANDRONICUS

185 A better head her glorious body fits
 Than his that shakes for age and feebleness:
 What should I don this robe, and trouble you?
 Be chosen with proclamations to-day,
 To-morrow yield up rule, resign my life,
 190 And set abroad new business for you all?
 Rome, I have been thy soldier forty years,
 And led my country's strength successfully,
 And buried one and twenty valiant sons,
 Knighted in field, slain manfully in arms,
 195 In right and service of their noble country:
 Give me a staff of honour for mine age,
 But not a sceptre to control the world:
 Upright he held it, lords, that held it last.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Titus, thou shalt obtain and ask the empery.

SATURNINUS

200 Proud and ambitious tribune, canst thou tell?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Patience, Prince Saturninus.

SATURNINUS

Romans, do me right:
 Patricians, draw your swords: and sheathe them not
 Till Saturninus be Rome's emperor.
 205 Andronicus, would thou wert shipp'd to hell,
 Rather than rob me of the people's hearts!

LUCIUS

Proud Saturnine, interrupter of the good
 That noble-minded Titus means to thee!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Content thee, prince; I will restore to thee
 210 The people's hearts, and wean them from themselves.

BASSIANUS

Andronicus, I do not flatter thee,
 But honour thee, and will do till I die:
 My faction if thou strengthen with thy friends,
 I will most thankful be; and thanks to men
 215 Of noble minds is honourable need.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

People of Rome, and people's tribunes here,
 I ask your voices and your suffrages:
 Will you bestow them friendly on Andronicus?

TRIBUNES

To gratify the good Andronicus,
 220 And gratulate his safe return to Rome,
 The people will accept whom he admits.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Tribunes, I thank you: and this suit I make,
 That you create your emperor's eldest son,
 Lord Saturnine; whose virtues will, I hope,
 225 Reflect on Rome as Titan's rays on earth,
 And ripen justice in this commonweal:
 Then, if you will elect by my advice,
 Crown him and say 'Long live our emperor!'

this first scene. The repetition is preparing the audience for the gore to come.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Her glorious body could do with a better head, one that doesn't shake with age and weakness. Why should I put on this robe, and trouble you? If you choose me today, tomorrow I'll die, and you'll have to go about the whole business again. Rome, I have been your soldier for forty years, led my country's army successfully, and buried twenty-one brave sons, killed fighting for their country. Give me a staff of honor in my old age, but not a scepter to control the world: the last one who held it was stronger than I am.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Titus, you will be emperor if you ask for it.

SATURNINUS

Proud and ambitious tribune, how can you tell?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Calm down, Prince Saturninus.

SATURNINUS

Romans, do the right thing: patricians, draw your swords, and don't put them away until Saturninus is Rome's emperor. Andronicus, I'd rather you were shipped to hell than steal the people's love from me!

LUCIUS

Proud Saturnine, you're getting in your own way--Titus is trying to do you a favor!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It will be all right, prince; I'll make the people love you again.

BASSIANUS

Andronicus, I say without flattery that I respect you, and will do so until I die. If you give me your support, I'll be thankful to you; and thanks is good food for honorable men.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

People of Rome, and their representatives here, I ask for your voices and your votes: will you let Andronicus choose the next emperor?

TRIBUNES

To please the good Andronicus, and celebrate his safe return to Rome, the people will accept whom he recommends.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Tribunes, thank you: I ask you to elect the emperor's eldest son, Lord Saturnine. I hope his virtues will shine on Rome like the sun, ripening justice in our country. So if you will elect him on my recommendation, crown him and say "Long live our emperor!"

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

With voices and applause of every sort,
230 Patricians and plebeians, we create
Lord Saturninus Rome's great emperor,
And say 'Long live our Emperor Saturnine!'

A long flourish till they come down

SATURNINUS

Titus Andronicus, for thy favors done
To us in our election this day,
235 I give thee thanks in part of thy deserts,
And will with deeds requite thy gentleness:
And, for an onset, Titus, to advance
Thy name and honourable family,
Lavinia will I make my empress,
240 Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart,
And in the sacred Pantheon her espouse:
Tell me, Andronicus, doth this motion please thee?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It doth, my worthy lord; and in this match
I hold me highly honour'd of your grace:
245 And here in sight of Rome to Saturnine,
King and commander of our commonweal,
The wide world's emperor, do I consecrate
My sword, my chariot and my prisoners;
Presents well worthy Rome's imperial lord:
250 Receive them then, the tribute that I owe,
Mine honour's ensigns humbled at thy feet.

SATURNINUS

Thanks, noble Titus, father of my life!
How proud I am of thee and of thy gifts
Rome shall record, and when I do forget
255 The least of these unspeakable deserts,
Romans, forget your fealty to me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

[*To TAMORA*] Now, madam, are you prisoner to
an emperor;
To him that, for your honour and your state,
260 Will use you nobly and your followers.

SATURNINUS

A goodly lady, trust me; of the hue
That I would choose, were I to choose anew.
Clear up, fair queen, that cloudy countenance:
Though chance of war hath wrought this change of cheer,
265 Thou comest not to be made a scorn in Rome:
Princely shall be thy usage every way.
Rest on my word, and let not discontent
Daunt all your hopes: madam, he comforts you
Can make you greater than the Queen of Goths.
270 Lavinia, you are not displeased with this?

LAVINIA

Not I, my lord; sith true nobility
Warrants these words in princely courtesy.

SATURNINUS

Thanks, sweet Lavinia. Romans, let us go;
Ransomless here we set our prisoners free:
275 Proclaim our honours, lords, with trump and drum.

Flourish. SATURNINUS courts TAMORA in dumb show

BASSIANUS

Lord Titus, by your leave, this maid is mine.

Seizing LAVINIA

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

With the voices of us all—patricians and plebeians ¹⁴—we elect Lord Saturninus as Rome's great emperor, and say "Long live our Emperor Saturnine!"

¹⁴ "Plebeians" are the common (as opposed to the noble patricians).

A long trumpet sounds until they come downstage.

SATURNINUS

Titus Andronicus, I thank you for the favor you've done me, and in return will show my gratitude with actions. To bring your family up in the world, I'll marry your daughter Lavinia in the holy Pantheon ¹⁵ and make her Rome's empress and mistress of my heart. Tell me, Andronicus, does this please you?

¹⁵ The Pantheon is a Roman temple. It still stands today, though it is now a Roman Catholic Church.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It does, my worthy lord; you honor me with this match. And here in front of all Rome, I give to you my sword, my chariot, and my prisoners, presents worthy of Rome's imperial lord: take them then, as the tribute I owe you.

SATURNINUS

Thanks, noble Titus, father of my life! Rome will know how proud I am of you and your gifts, and when I forget the least of them, Romans, forget your loyalty to me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

[*To TAMORA*] Now, madam, you're the prisoner of an emperor; out of respect for your honor and rank, he'll treat you and your followers well.

SATURNINUS

A lovely lady, trust me; of the sort that I would choose, if I could choose again. Don't make that sad face, beautiful queen: although you've been defeated in war, you aren't in Rome to be humiliated. You'll be treated like a queen in every way. Trust me, and don't let grief blight your hopes: madam, the man that comforts you can make you greater than the Queen of Goths. Lavinia, aren't you angry about this?

LAVINIA

Not I, my lord; a king should speak nobly and courteously.

SATURNINUS

Thanks, sweet Lavinia. Romans, let us go; we set these prisoners free without ransom. Celebrate our honor, lords, with trumpets and drums.

Trumpets are heard. SATURNINUS flirts with TAMORA in the background.

BASSIANUS

Lord Titus, with all due respect, this girl is mine.

BASSIANUS seizes LAVINIA.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

How, sir! are you in earnest then, my lord?

BASSIANUS

280 Ay, noble Titus; and resolved withal
To do myself this reason and this right.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

'Suum cuique' is our Roman justice:
This prince in justice seizeth but his own.

LUCIUS

And that he will, and shall, if Lucius live.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

285 Traitors, avaunt! Where is the emperor's guard?
Treason, my lord! Lavinia is surprised!

SATURNINUS

Surprised! by whom?

BASSIANUS

By him that justly may
Bear his betroth'd from all the world away.

290

Exeunt BASSIANUS and MARCUS with LAVINIA

MUTIUS

Brothers, help to convey her hence away,
And with my sword I'll keep this door safe.

Exeunt LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Follow, my lord, and I'll soon bring her back.

MUTIUS

295 My lord, you pass not here.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What, villain boy!
Barr'st me my way in Rome?

Stabbing MUTIUS

MUTIUS

Help, Lucius, help!

300

Dies

During the fray, SATURNINUS, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON and AARON go out and re-enter, above

Re-enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS

My lord, you are unjust, and, more than so,
In wrongful quarrel you have slain your son.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Nor thou, nor he, are any sons of mine;
My sons would never so dishonour me:
Traitor, restore Lavinia to the emperor.

305

LUCIUS

Dead, if you will; but not to be his wife,
That is another's lawful promised love.

Exit

TITUS ANDRONICUS

How could this be, sir? Are you serious, my lord?

BASSIANUS

Yes, noble Titus; and I'm prepared to fight for her.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

"To each his own" is our Roman law; this prince takes what
is his by right.

LUCIUS

And that he will, and shall, if Lucius is alive to fight for it.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Traitors, stop! Where are the emperor's guards? Treason,
my lord! Lavinia is taken!

SATURNINUS

Taken! By whom?

BASSIANUS

By her betrothed, who can justly take her away from all the
world.

BASSIANUS and MARCUS exit with LAVINIA.

MUTIUS

Brothers, help me take her away, and I'll guard this door
with my sword.

LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS exit.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

[To SATURNINUS] Come with me, my lord, and I'll bring her
back soon.

MUTIUS

My lord, you can't pass me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What, stupid boy! You stand in my way in Rome?

TITUS stabs MUTIUS.

MUTIUS

Help, Lucius, help!

MUTIUS dies.

During the fight, SATURNINUS, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON and AARON go out and re-enter, observing from above.

LUCIUS re-enters.

LUCIUS

My lord, you are wrong, and, more than that, you've killed
your own son.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

He's no son of mine, and nor are you: my sons would never
dishonor me like this. Traitor, give Lavinia to the emperor.

LUCIUS

I'll give her to you dead, if you want; but she'll never be his
wife. She is lawfully betrothed to another.

LUCIUS exits.

SATURNINUS

No, Titus, no; the emperor needs her not,
 310 Nor her, nor thee, nor any of thy stock:
 I'll trust, by leisure, him that mocks me once;
 Thee never, nor thy traitorous haughty sons,
 Confederates all thus to dishonour me.
 Was there none else in Rome to make a stale,
 315 But Saturnine? Full well, Andronicus,
 Agree these deeds with that proud brag of thine,
 That said'st I begg'd the empire at thy hands.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

O monstrous! what reproachful words are these?

SATURNINUS

But go thy ways; go, give that changing piece
 320 To him that flourish'd for her with his sword
 A valiant son-in-law thou shalt enjoy;
 One fit to bandy with thy lawless sons,
 To ruffle in the commonwealth of Rome.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

These words are razors to my wounded heart.

SATURNINUS

325 And therefore, lovely Tamora, queen of Goths,
 That like the stately Phoebe 'mongst her nymphs
 Dost overshone the gallant'st dames of Rome,
 If thou be pleased with this my sudden choice,
 Behold, I choose thee, Tamora, for my bride,
 330 And will create thee empress of Rome,
 Speak, Queen of Goths, dost thou applaud my choice?
 And here I swear by all the Roman gods,
 Sith priest and holy water are so near
 And tapers burn so bright and every thing
 In readiness for Hymenaeus stand,
 335 I will not re-salute the streets of Rome,
 Or climb my palace, till from forth this place
 I lead espoused my bride along with me.

TAMORA

And here, in sight of heaven, to Rome I swear,
 340 If Saturnine advance the Queen of Goths,
 She will a handmaid be to his desires,
 A loving nurse, a mother to his youth.

SATURNINUS

Ascend, fair queen, Pantheon. Lords, accompany
 Your noble emperor and his lovely bride,
 345 Sent by the heavens for Prince Saturnine,
 Whose wisdom hath her fortune conquered:
 There shall we consummate our spousal rites.

Exeunt all but TITUS

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I am not bid to wait upon this bride.
 Titus, when wert thou wont to walk alone,
 350 Dishonour'd thus, and challenged of wrongs?

Re-enter MARCUS, LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

O Titus, see, O, see what thou hast done!
 In a bad quarrel slain a virtuous son.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, foolish tribune, no; no son of mine,
 355 Nor thou, nor these, confederates in the deed
 That hath dishonour'd all our family;
 Unworthy brother, and unworthy sons!

SATURNINUS

No, Titus, no; the emperor doesn't need her, nor you, nor
 any of your family. I might learn to trust a man again after
 he made fun of me once; but I'll never trust you, nor your
 traitorous and proud sons, since you all planned together to
 dishonor me. Wasn't there anyone else in Rome that you
 could mock other than Saturnine? This stunt perfectly
 matches your ridiculous brag that I begged you to give me
 the empire.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, monstrous! Why are you saying these cruel things to
 me?

SATURNINUS

But go away; go give your silly daughter to the man who
 waved his sword around for her. You'll have a brave son-in-
 law, one fit to squabble with your law-breaking sons,
 disturbing the peace in Rome.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

These words cut my wounded heart like knives.

SATURNINUS

And so, lovely Tamora, Queen of Goths--that, like Phoebe¹⁶
 among her nymphs, outshines all the loveliest women
 of Rome--if you accept my sudden proposal, I choose you,
 Tamora, for my wife, and will make you empress of Rome.
 Say something, Queen of Goths, do you approve of my
 choice? And I promise by all the Roman gods, since we have
 the priest, the holy water, and the candles here already, I
 won't go out into the streets of Rome or to my palace until
 we're married.

¹⁶ "Phoebe" is the Roman goddess of the moon.

TAMORA

And here, by heaven, I swear to Rome that if Saturnine
 marries the Queen of Goths, she will be a servant to his
 desires, a loving nurse, and a mother to his youth.

SATURNINUS

Come up, my fair queen, and let's go to the Pantheon.
 Lords, come with your noble emperor and his lovely bride,
 sent from heaven to Prince Saturnine, who has wisely
 looked past her misfortune--there we will be married.

All but TITUS exit.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I am not asked to go with them. Titus, when was the last
 time you walked alone, dishonored and accused of doing
 wrong?

MARCUS, LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS re-enter.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, Titus, see, oh, see what you have done! In a rash fight
 you've killed a virtuous son.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, foolish tribune, no; he was no son of mine, nor are you,
 nor these, who participated in dishonoring our family.
 Unworthy brother, and unworthy sons!

LUCIUS

But let us give him burial, as becomes;
Give Mutius burial with our brethren.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

360 Traitors, away! he rests not in this tomb:
This monument five hundred years hath stood,
Which I have sumptuously re-edified:
Here none but soldiers and Rome's servitors
Repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls:
365 Bury him where you can; he comes not here.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, this is impiety in you:
My nephew Mutius' deeds do plead for him
He must be buried with his brethren.

MARTIUS

And shall, or him we will accompany.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

370 'And shall! what villain was it that spake
that word?

QUINTUS

He that would vouch it in any place but here.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What, would you bury him in my despite?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

No, noble Titus, but entreat of thee
375 To pardon Mutius and to bury him.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Marcus, even thou hast struck upon my crest,
And, with these boys, mine honour thou hast wounded:
My foes I do repute you every one;
So, trouble me no more, but get you gone.

MARTIUS

380 He is not with himself; let us withdraw.

QUINTUS

Not I, till Mutius' bones be buried.

MARCUS and the Sons of TITUS kneel

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Brother, for in that name doth nature plead,--

QUINTUS

Father, and in that name doth nature speak,--

TITUS ANDRONICUS

385 Speak thou no more, if all the rest will speed.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Renowned Titus, more than half my soul,--

LUCIUS

Dear father, soul and substance of us all,--

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Suffer thy brother Marcus to inter
His noble nephew here in virtue's nest,
390 That died in honour and Lavinia's cause.
Thou art a Roman; be not barbarous:
The Greeks upon advice did bury Ajax
That slew himself; and wise Laertes' son
Did graciously plead for his funerals:

LUCIUS

But at least let us bury him, as we should; give Mutius burial
with our brothers.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Traitors, go away! He won't rest in this tomb: this
monument has stood for five hundred years, and I have
restored it at great expense, and only Rome's soldiers and
servants are buried here in here, not those killed in low
street fights. Bury him wherever you want, since he won't
be buried here.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, this is not fair. My nephew Mutius did something
honorable; he must be buried with his brothers.

MARTIUS

And he shall, or we'll go with him to the grave.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

'And shall!' What villain said that?

QUINTUS

He that would fight for it in any place less holy than here.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What, would you bury him here without my permission?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

No, noble Titus, but we beg you to pardon Mutius and bury
him.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Marcus, even you are against me; and with these boys,
you've wounded my honor. You're all my enemies, so don't
bother me anymore, but go away.

MARTIUS

He is not himself; let's go.

QUINTUS

I won't go until we've buried Mutius.

MARCUS and the sons of TITUS kneel.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Brother, for that word reminds you of the natural ties
between us--

QUINTUS

Father, and in that word nature speaks too--

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Don't say anything else, if this is going where I think it is.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Famous Titus, more than half my soul--

LUCIUS

Dear father, soul and body of us all--

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Let your brother Marcus bury his noble nephew here with
honor, since he died for Lavinia's cause. You are a Roman;
don't be uncivilized. The Greeks buried Ajax ¹⁷, although
he killed himself, after wise Laertes' son ¹⁸ begged for a
funeral: so don't let young Mutius, who you loved, be
prevented from joining his brothers.

¹⁷ In early modern England, people who committed suicide were typically denied burial in a church graveyard. However, Marcus gives the example of "Ajax"—a character in Homer's *Iliad*—who committed suicide, and was allowed an honorable funeral.

Let not young Mutius, then, that was thy joy
Be barr'd his entrance here.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Rise, Marcus, rise.
The dismal' st day is this that e'er I saw,
To be dishonour'd by my sons in Rome!

400 Well, bury him, and bury me the next.

MUTIUS is put into the tomb

LUCIUS

There lie thy bones, sweet Mutius, with thy friends,
Till we with trophies do adorn thy tomb.

ALL

[Kneeling] No man shed tears for noble Mutius;
He lives in fame that died in virtue's cause.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

405 My lord, to step out of these dreary dumps,
How comes it that the subtle Queen of Goths
Is of a sudden thus advanced in Rome?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I know not, Marcus; but I know it is,
Whether by device or no, the heavens can tell:
410 Is she not then beholding to the man
That brought her for this high good turn so far?
Yes, and will nobly him remunerate.

Flourish. Re-enter, from one side, SATURNINUS attended, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON and AARON; from the other, BASSIANUS, LAVINIA, and others

SATURNINUS

So, Bassianus, you have play'd your prize:
God give you joy, sir, of your gallant bride!

BASSIANUS

415 And you of yours, my lord! I say no more,
Nor wish no less; and so, I take my leave.

SATURNINUS

Traitor, if Rome have law or we have power,
Thou and thy faction shall repent this rape.

BASSIANUS

Rape, call you it, my lord, to seize my own,
420 My truth-betrothed love and now my wife?
But let the laws of Rome determine all;
Meanwhile I am possess'd of that is mine.

SATURNINUS

'Tis good, sir: you are very short with us;
But, if we live, we'll be as sharp with you.

BASSIANUS

425 My lord, what I have done, as best I may,
Answer I must and shall do with my life.
Only thus much I give your grace to know:
By all the duties that I owe to Rome,
This noble gentleman, Lord Titus here,
430 Is in opinion and in honour wrong'd;
That in the rescue of Lavinia
With his own hand did slay his youngest son,
In zeal to you and highly moved to wrath
To be controll'd in that he frankly gave:
435 Receive him, then, to favor, Saturnine,
That hath express'd himself in all his deeds

18 "Laertes's son" is Odysseus, the Greek hero who famously took ten years to make it home to Ithaca from the Trojan War.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Get up, Marcus, get up. This is the saddest day I ever saw, to be dishonored by my sons in Rome! Well, bury him, and bury me next.

MUTIUS is put into the tomb.

LUCIUS

Lie there, sweet Mutius, with your friends, until we cover your tomb with trophies won in battle.

ALL

[Kneeling] Let no one cry for noble Mutius, since the person who dies fighting for what's right will live forever in memory.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, to leave these sad thoughts behind: how did it happen that the clever Queen of Goths is suddenly our empress?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I don't know, Marcus; but I know it's happened, and whether by some trickery or not, only the heavens can tell. But shouldn't she feel grateful to the man who has raised her so high? Yes, and she'll respond in kind.

Trumpets. SATURNINUS enters from one side with servants, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON and AARON; from the other, BASSIANUS, LAVINIA, and others.

SATURNINUS

So, Bassianus, you have won your prize. God make you happy with your lovely bride!

BASSIANUS

And you with yours, my lord! I have nothing else to say, and don't wish you any less, so I'll go now.

SATURNINUS

Traitor, if there's law in Rome or if we have power, you and your brothers will regret this rape.

BASSIANUS

You call it rape, my lord, to take my own, my true love and fiancee and now my wife? But let the law of Rome take its course; in the meantime, I have what is mine.

SATURNINUS

All right, sir, you are very rude to us. But, if we live, you might find that I can be as sharp with you.

BASSIANUS

My lord, I'll answer for what I've done, with my life if I must. But I'll just say this: I swear by my duty to Rome that this noble gentleman, Lord Titus here, has suffered a wrong at your hands. In the rescue of Lavinia, he killed his youngest son out of loyalty to you and in anger at being forced to go back on his word. Favor him, then, Saturnine, since he's proven himself in everything he does to be a father and friend to you and Rome.

A father and a friend to thee and Rome.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Prince Bassianus, leave to plead my deeds:
'Tis thou and those that have dishonour'd me.
Rome and the righteous heavens be my judge,
How I have loved and honour'd Saturnine!

440

TAMORA

My worthy lord, if ever Tamora
Were gracious in those princely eyes of thine,
Then hear me speak in indifferently for all;
And at my suit, sweet, pardon what is past.

445

SATURNINUS

What, madam! be dishonour'd openly,
And basely put it up without revenge?

TAMORA

Not so, my lord; the gods of Rome forbend
I should be author to dishonour you!
But on mine honour dare I undertake
For good Lord Titus' innocence in all;
Whose fury not dissembled speaks his griefs:
Then, at my suit, look graciously on him;
Lose not so noble a friend on vain suppose,
Nor with sour looks afflict his gentle heart.

450

[Aside to SATURNINUS]

be won at last;
Dissemble all your griefs and discontents:

460

You are but newly planted in your throne;
Lest, then, the people, and patricians too,
Upon a just survey, take Titus' part,
And so supplant you for ingratitude,
Which Rome reputes to be a heinous sin,

465

Yield at entreats; and then let me alone:
I'll find a day to massacre them all
And raze their faction and their family,
The cruel father and his traitorous sons,
To whom I sued for my dear son's life,

470

And make them know what 'tis to let a queen
Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain.

[Aloud]

Come, come, sweet emperor; come, Andronicus;
Take up this good old man, and cheer the heart
That dies in tempest of thy angry frown.

475

SATURNINUS

Rise, Titus, rise; my empress hath prevail'd.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I thank your majesty, and her, my lord:
These words, these looks, infuse new life in me.

480

TAMORA

Titus, I am incorporate in Rome,
A Roman now adopted happily,
And must advise the emperor for his good.
This day all quarrels die, Andronicus;
And let it be mine honour, good my lord,
That I have reconciled your friends and you.
For you, Prince Bassianus, I have pass'd
My word and promise to the emperor,
That you will be more mild and tractable.
And fear not lords, and you, Lavinia;
By my advice, all humbled on your knees,
You shall ask pardon of his majesty.

485

490

LUCIUS

We do, and vow to heaven and to his highness,
That what we did was mildly as we might,
Tendering our sister's honour and our own.

495

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Prince Bassianus, I can defend myself without your help; it's
you and your friends who have dishonored me. Rome and
heaven above know my love and loyalty to Saturnine!

TAMORA

My worthy lord, if you ever loved Tamora, then let me speak
as a neutral party. At my request, sweetheart, forgive what's
in the past.

SATURNINUS

What, madam! Can I put up with these insults?

TAMORA

Of course not, my lord; the gods of Rome forbid that I would
urge you to do anything dishonorable! But I vouch for good
Lord Titus's innocence in everything; you can see his grief
on his face. Then, at my request, forgive him. Don't lose a
noble friend out of suspicion, or hurt his soft heart with
angry looks.

[So only SATURNINUS can hear] Listen to me: hide what
you're feeling. You just took the throne--so, unless you want
the people and patricians to take Titus's side, and unseat
you for not being grateful to him (and Romans hate
ingratitude), forgive him. And then let me work: I'll find a
day to kill them all. I'll destroy their faction and family, the
cruel father and his traitorous sons--to whom I begged for
my son's life. I'll make them know what happens to those
who let a queen kneel in the streets and beg in vain.

[To all] Come, come, sweet emperor; come, Andronicus.
Raise up this good old man, and cheer him up, since he's
miserable when you frown at him.

SATURNINUS

Rise, Titus, rise; my empress has convinced me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I thank your majesty, and her, my lord. These words and
looks of forgiveness give new life to me.

TAMORA

Titus, I am now a Roman, and must give the emperor good
advice. Let's forget all our past quarrels today, Andronicus;
and let it be my chief accomplishment that I've brought you
all back together. For you, Prince Bassianus, I have
promised the emperor that you'll be more mild and
obedient in the future. And don't be afraid, lords, and you,
Lavinia: take my advice, kneel down, and ask his majesty
for forgiveness.

LUCIUS

[Kneeling] We do, and promise heaven and his highness,
that we were as moderate as we could be, when our sister's
honor and our own was at stake.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

That, on mine honour, here I do protest.

SATURNINUS

Away, and talk not; trouble us no more.

TAMORA

Nay, nay, sweet emperor, we must all be friends:
The tribune and his nephews kneel for grace;
500 I will not be denied: sweet heart, look back.

SATURNINUS

Marcus, for thy sake and thy brother's here,
And at my lovely Tamora's entreats,
I do remit these young men's heinous faults: Stand up.
Lavinia, though you left me like a churl,
505 I found a friend, and sure as death I swore
I would not part a bachelor from the priest.
Come, if the emperor's court can feast two brides,
You are my guest, Lavinia, and your friends.
This day shall be a love-day, Tamora.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

510 To-morrow, an it please your majesty
To hunt the panther and the hart with me,
With horn and hound we'll give your grace bonjour.

SATURNINUS

Be it so, Titus, and gramercy too.

Flourish. Exeunt

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

[Kneeling] I vow that too, on my honor.

SATURNINUS

Go away, and be quiet; don't bother us anymore.

TAMORA

No, no, sweet emperor; we must all be friends. The tribune
and his nephews kneel for forgiveness. I won't be denied:
sweetheart, look at them.

SATURNINUS

Marcus, for the sake of you and your brother, and because
Tamora begs me, I forgive these young men's crimes
against me. Stand up. Lavinia, though you left me harshly, I
would not have found my love if you hadn't: I swore that I
wouldn't walk away from the priest without a wife. Come, if
the emperor's court will celebrate two brides, you'll be my
guest, Lavinia, and your family. This day will be a love-day,
Tamora.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Tomorrow, if your majesty likes, we can go hunting for
panther and deer. We'll wake you with the sounds of our
dogs and horns.

SATURNINUS

We will come, Titus, and many thanks to you.

Trumpets. All exit.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter AARON

AARON

Now climbeth Tamora Olympus' top,
Safe out of fortune's shot; and sits aloft,
Secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash;
Advanced above pale envy's threatening reach.
5 As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,
Gallops the zodiac in his glistening coach,
And overlooks the highest-peering hills;
So Tamora:
10 Upon her wit doth earthly honour wait,
And virtue stoops and trembles at her frown.
Then, Aaron, arm thy heart, and fit thy thoughts,
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress,
And mount her pitch, whom thou in triumph long
15 Hast prisoner held, fetter'd in amorous chains
And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes
Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.
Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!
I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold,
20 To wait upon this new-made empress.
To wait, said I? to wanton with this queen,
This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph,
This siren, that will charm Rome's Saturnine,
And see his shipwreck and his commonweal's.
25 Holloa! what storm is this?

Enter DEMETRIUS and CHIRON, braving

DEMETRIUS

Chiron, thy years want wit, thy wit wants edge,
And manners, to intrude where I am graced;

Shakescleare Translation

AARON enters.

AARON

So now Tamora is as high as Olympus 1, safe from
misfortune and jealousy. She's safe from both thunder's
crack and lightning's flash, having ascended farther than
envy can reach. She's like the golden sun that greets the
morning, and, having crowned the ocean with its beams,
gallops across the sky in a glittering coach and looks down
on even the highest hills. Honorable and virtuous men wait
for her words, and tremble when she frowns. Then, Aaron,
arm your heart and make your thoughts fit to go to the top
with your imperial mistress--since she's been your prisoner
in love for a long time, bound to you with tighter chains
that Prometheus 2 was tied to that rock in the Caucasus.
Cast away poor clothing and low thoughts! I will be bright,
shining in pearl and gold, when I serve this new-made
empress. Did I say serve? I meant that I'll play with this
queen, this goddess, this Semiramis 3, this nymph, this
siren 4, that will charm Rome's Saturnine, and lead him to
his ruin. But what's all this noise?

1 Mount "Olympus" is the highest mountain in Greece, and in mythology it is the home of the gods.

2 "Prometheus" stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity, and for this transgression he was chained to a rock in the Caucasus, where his liver was eaten every day by an eagle. So, this is a rather grim image to describe a love affair.

3 Semiramis was the wife of the legendary King Nimrod of Assyria, and is famed for her bravery, cruelty, and for cheating on her husband.

4 Sirens are mythical creatures who, with their beautiful voices, lure sailors to shipwreck on the island they inhabit.

DEMETRIUS and CHIRON enter, fighting.

DEMETRIUS

Chiron, you're young and stupid, and you don't have what it
takes to get in my way and intrude where I'm welcome.

And may, for aught thou know'st, affected be.

CHIRON

Demetrius, thou dost over-ween in all;
 30 And so in this, to bear me down with braves.
 'Tis not the difference of a year or two
 Makes me less gracious or thee more fortunate:
 I am as able and as fit as thou
 To serve, and to deserve my mistress' grace;
 35 And that my sword upon thee shall approve,
 And plead my passions for Lavinia's love.

AARON

[Aside] Clubs, clubs! these lovers will not keep
 the peace.

DEMETRIUS

Why, boy, although our mother, unadvised,
 40 Give you a dancing-rapier by your side,
 Are you so desperate grown, to threat your friends?
 Go to; have your lath glued within your sheath
 Till you know better how to handle it.

CHIRON

Meanwhile, sir, with the little skill I have,
 45 Full well shalt thou perceive how much I dare.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, boy, grow ye so brave?

They draw

AARON

[Coming forward] Why, how now, lords!
 So near the emperor's palace dare you draw,
 50 And maintain such a quarrel openly?
 Full well I wot the ground of all this grudge:
 I would not for a million of gold
 The cause were known to them it most concerns;
 Nor would your noble mother for much more
 55 Be so dishonour'd in the court of Rome.
 For shame, put up.

DEMETRIUS

Not I, till I have sheathed
 My rapier in his bosom and withal
 Thrust these reproachful speeches down his throat
 60 That he hath breathed in my dishonour here.

CHIRON

For that I am prepared and full resolved.
 Foul-spoken coward, that thunder'st with thy tongue,
 And with thy weapon nothing darest perform!

AARON

Away, I say!
 65 Now, by the gods that warlike Goths adore,
 This petty brabble will undo us all.
 Why, lords, and think you not how dangerous
 It is to jet upon a prince's right?
 What, is Lavinia then become so loose,
 70 Or Bassianus so degenerate,
 That for her love such quarrels may be broach'd
 Without controlment, justice, or revenge?
 Young lords, beware! and should the empress know
 This discord's ground, the music would not please.

CHIRON

75 I care not, I, knew she and all the world:
 I love Lavinia more than all the world.

CHIRON

Demetrius, you've always been arrogant, and it's no different in this. You're only a year or two older than me, and that doesn't make you any better. I'm as fit as you to serve my mistress and make her love me. And I'll prove it with my sword, to show how much I want Lavinia's love.

AARON

[To himself] I'll have to call the guards; these lovers will start fighting each other soon.

DEMETRIUS

Why, boy, ever since our mother gave you a toy sword you've been desperate to start brandishing it around. Give it to me; I'll glue it to its sheath until you know how to handle it.

CHIRON

Before that, sir, I'll use the little skill I have to show you how ready I am to use it.

DEMETRIUS

What, boy, are you so brave now?

They draw their swords.

AARON

[Coming forward] What's this, lords? How can you openly draw your swords so close to the emperor's palace? I know why you're fighting: I wouldn't take a million gold coins to let them know why. Your noble mother wouldn't take so much more to let you dishonor her in Rome. For God's sake, put your swords away.

DEMETRIUS

I won't, not until I've stabbed him and thrown his insulting words back down his throat.

CHIRON

I'm prepared for that. You coward, talking about what you don't dare to do yourself!

AARON

Put it away, I say! This stupid fight will ruin us all. Lords, haven't you thought how dangerous it is to try to seduce a prince's wife? Is Lavinia so loose, or Bassianus so corrupt, that you can fight over her love without bringing disaster on your heads? Young lords, watch yourselves! If the empress knew about this, she wouldn't be happy.

CHIRON

I don't care if she or anyone else knows it: I love Lavinia more than all the world.

DEMETRIUS

Youngling, learn thou to make some meaner choice:
Lavinia is thine elder brother's hope.

AARON

Why, are ye mad? or know ye not, in Rome
80 How furious and impatient they be,
And cannot brook competitors in love?
I tell you, lords, you do but plot your deaths
By this device.

CHIRON

Aaron, a thousand deaths
85 Would I propose to achieve her whom I love.

AARON

To achieve her! how?

DEMETRIUS

Why makest thou it so strange?
She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
She is a woman, therefore may be won;
90 She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved.
What, man! more water glideth by the mill
Than wots the miller of; and easy it is
Of a cut loaf to steal a shive, we know:
Though Bassianus be the emperor's brother.
95 Better than he have worn Vulcan's badge.

AARON

[Aside] Ay, and as good as Saturninus may.

DEMETRIUS

Then why should he despair that knows to court it
With words, fair looks and liberality?
What, hast not thou full often struck a doe,
100 And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose?

AARON

Why, then, it seems, some certain snatch or so
Would serve your turns.

CHIRON

Ay, so the turn were served.

DEMETRIUS

Aaron, thou hast hit it.

AARON

105 Would you had hit it too!
Then should not we be tired with this ado.
Why, hark ye, hark ye! and are you such fools
To square for this? would it offend you, then
That both should speed?

CHIRON

110 Faith, not me.

DEMETRIUS

Nor me, so I were one.

AARON

For shame, be friends, and join for that you jar:
'Tis policy and stratagem must do
That you affect; and so must you resolve,
115 That what you cannot as you would achieve,
You must perforce accomplish as you may.
Take this of me: Lucrece was not more chaste
Than this Lavinia, Bassianus' love.

DEMETRIUS

Young man, choose someone else: Lavinia is your elder
brother's choice.

AARON

What, are you crazy? Don't you know how jealous Romans
are of their competitors in love? I tell you, lords, you're
going to get yourselves killed.

CHIRON

Aaron, I'd die a thousand times to have her.

AARON

To have her! How?

DEMETRIUS

Why do you sound so surprised? She is a woman, so can be
wooed; she's a woman, and so can be won; she is Lavinia,
so she must be loved. You know what I mean, man: more
water goes by the mill than the miller knows about, and it's
a simple thing to steal a slice of a loaf of bread. Bassianus is
the emperor's brother, but greater men than him have been
cheated on by their wives.

AARON

[To himself] True--even a man as great as Saturninus can be
cheated.

DEMETRIUS

Then, it should be no problem for a man who knows how to
flirt with a woman, seeming generous and charming. What,
haven't you often killed a deer right under her owner's
nose?

AARON

Why, then it seems a quick hunt [5] would serve your
purposes.

[5] Aaron's lewd metaphor here
("some certain snatch or so") implies
that if the brothers could only have
sex with Lavinia once or twice, it
would satisfy their desire for her.

CHIRON

Yes, if that would do it.

DEMETRIUS

Aaron, you're right on point there.

AARON

I wish you were as sharp! Then we wouldn't be making all
this fuss. Why--listen to me!--are you fighting each other
over her? Would you be offended if you both succeeded?

CHIRON

No, not me.

DEMETRIUS

Nor I, as long as I got what I wanted.

AARON

Well, then why don't you work together: if you want her,
you'll need a plan. You must decide that if you can't have it
as you would ideally want, then you will have it however
you can. Take my word for it: Lavinia, Bassianus's love, is as
chaste as Lucrece [6]. We have to find a quicker way than
trying to persuade her, since that will never work, and I
have just the path in mind. My lords, tomorrow we're all

[6] "Lucrece," a virtuous Roman
woman, was raped by Tarquin after
she refused his advances. Her name,
along with that of the similarly abused

A speedier course than lingering languishment
 120 Must we pursue, and I have found the path.
 My lords, a solemn hunting is in hand;
 There will the lovely Roman ladies troop:
 The forest walks are wide and spacious;
 And many unfrequented plots there are
 125 Fitted by kind for rape and villany:
 Single you thither then this dainty doe,
 And strike her home by force, if not by words:
 This way, or not at all, stand you in hope.
 Come, come, our empress, with her sacred wit
 130 To villany and vengeance consecrate,
 Will we acquaint with all that we intend;
 And she shall file our engines with advice,
 That will not suffer you to square yourselves,
 But to your wishes' height advance you both.
 135 The emperor's court is like the house of Fame,
 The palace full of tongues, of eyes, and ears:
 The woods are ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull;
 There speak, and strike, brave boys, and take
 your turns;
 140 There serve your lusts, shadow'd from heaven's eye,
 And revel in Lavinia's treasury.

CHIRON

Thy counsel, lad, smells of no cowardice.

DEMETRIUS

Sit fas aut nefas, till I find the stream
 To cool this heat, a charm to calm these fits.
 145 Per Styga, per manes vehor.

Exeunt

going hunting, and the lovely Roman ladies will come along: the forest paths are wide and spacious, and there are many isolated places fit for rape and other crimes. Bring this pretty doe there alone, and take her by force, if not by words: this is your only hope. Come on, and let's tell our empress our villainous and vengeful plans; all her energy is devoted to revenge. She will improve on our plans 7 with her advice, and will make sure you don't mess up those plans by fighting amongst yourselves. You'll both get what you want. The emperor's palace is as full of tongues, eyes, and ears as the House of Fame 8; you'll have no privacy there. But the woods are pitiless, dreadful, and hear nothing; that's where you can do what you want, brave boys, and take your turns with Lavinia. There you can satisfy your lusts in the shadows, where heaven can't see, and enjoy the treasures of her body.

Philomel, appear frequently in this play.

7 In the original text, "file our engines" plays on a multiple meanings for "engine." The word can mean "machine," "instrument of torture," and "plot." Tamora will "file" or sharpen their tools for torture, which are nothing but their own evil plans.

8 The House of Fame appears in Ovid's "Metamorphoses" (which shows up again and again in this play) as a place filled with echoing rumor. In Chaucer's "House of Fame," Fame herself has countless eyes, ears, and tongues.

CHIRON

Your advice is good, friend.

DEMETRIUS

Whether it's right or wrong, I must have her: until I find the stream to cool my heat, or some medicine to calm me down, I live in hell.

All exit.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter TITUS ANDRONICUS, with Hunters, &c., MARCUS, LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS

TITUS ANDRONICUS

The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
 The fields are fragrant and the woods are green:
 Uncouple here and let us make a bay
 And wake the emperor and his lovely bride
 5 And rouse the prince and ring a hunter's peal,
 That all the court may echo with the noise.
 Sons, let it be your charge, as it is ours,
 To attend the emperor's person carefully:
 I have been troubled in my sleep this night,
 10 But dawning day new comfort hath inspired.

A cry of hounds and horns, winded in a peal. Enter SATURNINUS, TAMORA, BASSIANUS, LAVINIA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON, and Attendants

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Many good morrows to your majesty;
 Madam, to you as many and as good:
 I promised your grace a hunter's peal.

SATURNINUS

15 And you have rung it lustily, my lord;
 Somewhat too early for new-married ladies.

BASSIANUS

Lavinia, how say you?

Shakescleare Translation

MARCUS, LUCIUS, QUINTUS, and MARTIUS, and TITUS ANDRONICUS enter, with hunters and other servants.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It's time to hunt--the morning is bright and gray, the fields are sweet-smelling, and the trees are in bloom. Let's separate here and make some noise to wake up the emperor and his lovely bride; we'll make enough sound to wake up the prince too, and the whole court. Sons, make sure you watch the emperor carefully, as I will. I had a bad night's sleep, but felt better when I woke up.

A loud noise of dogs barking and horns. SATURNINUS, TAMORA, BASSIANUS, LAVINIA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON, and servants enter.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Good morning, your majesty; and madam, good morning to you, too. I promised that I would wake you up with the sound of the hunt.

SATURNINUS

And you have made quite a noise, my lord--somewhat too early for ladies who just got married.

BASSIANUS

Lavinia, what do you think?

LAVINIA

I say, no;
I have been broad awake two hours and more.

SATURNINUS

20 Come on, then; horse and chariots let us have,
And to our sport.
[To TAMORA]
Madam, now shall ye see
Our Roman hunting.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I have dogs, my lord,
Will rouse the proudest panther in the chase,
And climb the highest promontory top.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

And I have horse will follow where the game
30 Makes way, and run like swallows o'er the plain.

DEMETRIUS

Chiron, we hunt not, we, with horse nor hound,
But hope to pluck a dainty doe to ground.

Exeunt

LAVINIA

I disagree; I've been awake for more than two hours
already.

SATURNINUS

Come on, then; let's get our horses and chariots and begin
the hunt.

[To TAMORA] Madam, now you'll see our Roman hunting.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I have dogs, my lord, that can outrun the proudest panther
in the chase, and climb the highest tops of the mountains.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

And I have horses that will follow wherever the prey goes,
flying like swallows over the open field.

DEMETRIUS

Chiron, we don't hunt with horses or dogs--but hope to
catch a dainty doe, nonetheless.

All exit.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter AARON, with a bag of gold

AARON

He that had wit would think that I had none,
To bury so much gold under a tree,
And never after to inherit it.
Let him that thinks of me so abjectly
5 Know that this gold must coin a stratagem,
Which, cunningly effected, will beget
A very excellent piece of villainy:
And so repose, sweet gold, for their unrest

Hides the gold

That have their alms out of the empress' chest.

Enter TAMORA

TAMORA

10 My lovely Aaron, wherefore look'st thou sad,
When every thing doth make a gleeful boast?
The birds chant melody on every bush,
The snake lies rolled in the cheerful sun,
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
15 And make a chequer'd shadow on the ground:
Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit,
And, whilst the babbling echo mocks the hounds,
Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns,
As if a double hunt were heard at once,
20 Let us sit down and mark their yelping noise;
And, after conflict such as was supposed
The wandering prince and Dido once enjoy'd,
When with a happy storm they were surprised
And curtain'd with a counsel-keeping cave,
25 We may, each wreathed in the other's arms,
Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber;
Whiles hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds
Be unto us as is a nurse's song
Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep.

Shakescleare Translation

AARON enters, with a bag of gold.

AARON

A smart man would think it's stupid to bury so much gold
under a tree and never use it. But I would tell him that I do
this for a plot: which, when it comes to pass, will make for
some excellent wickedness. So rest there, sweet gold, and
cause unrest.

AARON hides the gold.

and take revenge on the empress's enemies.

TAMORA enters.

TAMORA

My lovely Aaron, why do you look sad when everything is so
beautiful? The birds are singing, the snake sleeps under the
cheerful sun, and the green leaves enjoy the cooling wind,
which makes a shadow on the ground. Let's sit down in the
shade, Aaron, and while sounds of the noisy hunt move
through the wood, the echoes replying to the horns' call as
if two hunts were happening at once, we'll stay here and
listen. We'll be like Dido and her wandering prince , who
took shelter in a cave during a storm. I can imagine what
they go up to in there, all alone. After our lovers' sport, we'll
have a glorious nap. As we rest in each other's arms, the
sounds of the hunt and the songs of sweet birds will lull us
to sleep.

 Tamora refers to the story of Dido, Queen of Carthage, and Aeneas. In Virgil's account in the "Aeneid," the two were hunting when a storm forced them to take refuge in a nearby cave. There, they slept together for the first time. Their love story, however, did not end happily. Aeneas sailed away from Carthage without telling Dido of his plans, and she committed suicide.

AARON

30 Madam, though Venus govern your desires,
Saturn is dominator over mine:
What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
My silence and my cloudy melancholy,
My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls
35 Even as an adder when she doth unroll
To do some fatal execution?
No, madam, these are no venereal signs:
Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.
40 Hark Tamora, the empress of my soul,
Which never hopes more heaven than rests in thee,
This is the day of doom for Bassianus:
His Philomel must lose her tongue to-day,
Thy sons make pillage of her chastity
45 And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood.
Seest thou this letter? take it up, I pray thee,
And give the king this fatal plotted scroll.
Now question me no more; we are espied;
Here comes a parcel of our hopeful booty,
50 Which dreads not yet their lives' destruction.

TAMORA

Ah, my sweet Moor, sweeter to me than life!

AARON

No more, great empress; Bassianus comes:
Be cross with him; and I'll go fetch thy sons
To back thy quarrels, whatsoe'er they be.

55

Exit

Enter BASSIANUS and LAVINIA

BASSIANUS

Who have we here? Rome's royal empress,
Unfurnish'd of her well-beseeming troop?
Or is it Dian, habited like her,
Who hath abandoned her holy groves
60 To see the general hunting in this forest?

TAMORA

Saucy controller of our private steps!
Had I the power that some say Dian had,
Thy temples should be planted presently
With horns, as was Actaeon's; and the hounds
Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs,
65 Unmannerly intruder as thou art!

LAVINIA

Under your patience, gentle empress,
'Tis thought you have a goodly gift in horning;
And to be doubted that your Moor and you
70 Are singled forth to try experiments:
Jove shield your husband from his hounds to-day!
'Tis pity they should take him for a stag.

BASSIANUS

Believe me, queen, your swarth Cimmerian
Doth make your honour of his body's hue,
Spotted, detested, and abominable.
Why are you sequester'd from all your train,
Dismounted from your snow-white goodly steed.
And wander'd hither to an obscure plot,
Accompanied but with a barbarous Moor,
80 If foul desire had not conducted you?

LAVINIA

And, being intercepted in your sport,
Great reason that my noble lord be rated

AARON

Madam, while the goddess Venus makes you think of love,
the god Saturn makes me think of destruction and death.
My angry looks, my silence, my sad mood, and my hair that
uncurls like a snake uncoiling itself to strike, have nothing
to do with sexual desire. Instead, they show that I'm
planning to take vengeance: revenge and blood are all I can
think of. Listen, Tamora—empress of my soul, since I don't
hope for salvation after death—Bassianus will die today. His
Philomel ² must lose her tongue, for your sons plan to
rape her and wash their hands in his blood. See this letter?
[Gives it to her] Take it, and give it to the king. Don't ask me
anymore; someone has seen us. Here come our victims,
although they don't know it yet.

² "Philomel" is a character in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. She is raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, who then cuts out her tongue so that she can't reveal who attacked her.

TAMORA

Oh, my sweet Moor ³, sweeter to me than life!

³ "Moor" was a generic Elizabethan term for an African or dark-skinned person.

AARON

No more, great empress; Bassianus is here. Find some
reason to argue with him; meanwhile, I'll go get your sons
so they can take revenge for you.

AARON exits.

BASSIANUS and LAVINIA enter.

BASSIANUS

Who have we here? Rome's royal empress, all alone with no
servants? Or is it the goddess Diana ⁴ who has left her
holy groves to come see the hunt?

⁴ In Greco-Roman mythology, Diana is the goddess of the hunt. Groves of oak trees are sacred to her, as are deer. Remember that Lavinia has been referred to as a doe, or female deer.

TAMORA

How dare you intrude on me like this! If I had Diana's
powers, I'd put horns on your head like Actaeon's ⁵, and
let the dogs tear you to pieces for disturbing my privacy!

⁵ In Ovid, Actaeon is a hunter who accidentally sees Diana bathing. As a punishment, she transforms him into a stag and sets his own hunting dogs on him.

LAVINIA

Oh, but gentle empress, we know you have a talent for
horning ⁶. And I'm sure you and your Moor are here
together: I hope your husband's dogs don't take him for a
stag.

⁶ By "horning," Lavinia means cuckolding—i.e. putting horns on her husband by cheating on him—since Tamora has been having an extramarital affair with Aaron.

BASSIANUS

Believe me, queen, your swarthy Cimmerian ⁷ is turning
you as black as him, disgusting and hateful. Why did you
sneak away from all your servants, get off your snowy white
horse, and wander to this isolated forest clearing,
accompanied only by a barbaric Moor—if your foul desires
didn't bring you here?

⁷ The Cimmerians were an ancient nomadic people of Asia Minor. They were associated with darkness because their land was far from the sun.

LAVINIA

And, since we've caught you in the act, my noble lord has
good reason to talk to you like this.

For sauciness. I pray you, let us hence,
And let her joy her raven-colour'd love;
This valley fits the purpose passing well.

85

BASSIANUS

The king my brother shall have note of this.

LAVINIA

Ay, for these slips have made him noted long:
Good king, to be so mightily abused!

TAMORA

Why have I patience to endure all this?

90

Enter DEMETRIUS and CHIRON

DEMETRIUS

How now, dear sovereign, and our gracious mother!
Why doth your highness look so pale and wan?

TAMORA

Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?
These two have 'ticed me hither to this place:
95 A barren detested vale, you see it is;
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe:
Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds,
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven:
100 And when they show'd me this abhorred pit,
They told me, here, at dead time of the night,
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins,
Would make such fearful and confused cries
105 As any mortal body hearing it
Should straight fall mad, or else die suddenly.
No sooner had they told this hellish tale,
But straight they told me they would bind me here
Unto the body of a dismal yew,
110 And leave me to this miserable death:
And then they call'd me foul adulteress,
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect:
And, had you not by wondrous fortune come,
115 This vengeance on me had they executed.
Revenge it, as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children.

DEMETRIUS

This is a witness that I am thy son.

Stabs BASSIANUS

CHIRON

120 And this for me, struck home to show my strength.

Also stabs BASSIANUS, who dies

LAVINIA

Ay, come, Semiramis, nay, barbarous Tamora,
For no name fits thy nature but thy own!

TAMORA

Give me thy poniard; you shall know, my boys
Your mother's hand shall right your mother's wrong.

125

DEMETRIUS

Stay, madam; here is more belongs to her;
First thrash the corn, then after burn the straw:
This minion stood upon her chastity,
Upon her nuptial vow, her loyalty,
130 And with that painted hope braves your mightiness:
And shall she carry this unto her grave?

[*To BASSIANUS*] Let's go, and let her enjoy her raven-colored lover; this ugly valley is perfect for her purposes.

BASSIANUS

The king, my brother, will know about this.

LAVINIA

Yes, for people have noticed that you keep slipping away.
The good king has been tricked one too many times!

TAMORA

Why do I have the patience to listen to you?

DEMETRIUS and CHIRON enter.

DEMETRIUS

What's the matter, dear queen and beloved mother? Why do you look so pale?

TAMORA

Don't you think I have reason to look pale? These two lured me to this isolated valley--a foul place, as you can see, where the trees are bare even in the summer, covered in moss and mistletoe ⁸, where the sun never shines and nothing lives but owls and ravens--and showed me this horrible pit in the ground. They told me that, at night, it's filled with a thousand demons, snakes toads, and goblins, who make such awful noise that anyone hearing it would go mad or fall dead. No sooner had they said this, but they added that they would tie me here to a tree and leave me to a miserable death. Then they called me a foul adulteress, lustful Goth, and all the worst insults you've ever heard. If you hadn't come to rescue me, they would have killed me. Take revenge, as you love your mother, or never call yourself my children again.

⁸ Mistletoe did not yet have its association with Christmas and kissing. Instead, it was known as a parasite.

DEMETRIUS

I'll show you that I'm your son.

DEMETRIUS stabs BASSIANUS.

CHIRON

And take this, too, to show my strength.

CHIRON also stabs BASSIANUS, who dies.

LAVINIA

Oh, Semiramis ⁹--no, barbaric Tamora--for there's no better name to fit your barbaric nature than your own!

⁹ Remember that Semiramis was the cruel wife of Nimrod, King of Babylon.

TAMORA

[*To Demetrius*] Give me your knife; you'll see, my boys, that your mother's own hand will take revenge.

DEMETRIUS

Stop, madam; we have more plans for her. Don't burn the straw until you've thrashed the corn ¹⁰. This girl acts like a chaste lady and puts herself above you, parading her faithfulness in her marriage; do you want her to die with that satisfaction?

¹⁰ When one "thrashes" or beats corn, the grain and seeds are separated from the husks. To "thrash in a woman's barn" was also slang at the time for having sex.

CHIRON

An if she do, I would I were an eunuch.
Drag hence her husband to some secret hole,
And make his dead trunk pillow to our lust.

TAMORA

135 But when ye have the honey ye desire,
Let not this wasp outlive, us both to sting.

CHIRON

I warrant you, madam, we wil l make that sure.
Come, mistress, now perforce we will enjoy
That nice-preserved honesty of yours.

LAVINIA

140 O Tamora! thou bear'st a woman's face,--

TAMORA

I will not hear her speak; away with her!

LAVINIA

Sweet lords, entreat her hear me but a word.

DEMETRIUS

Listen, fair madam: let it be your glory
To see her tears; but be your heart to them
145 As unrelenting flint to drops of rain.

LAVINIA

When did the tiger's young ones teach the dam?
O, do not learn her wrath; she taught it thee;
The milk thou suck'dst from her did turn to marble;

Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny.

150 Yet every mother breeds not sons alike:

[To CHIRON]

Do thou entreat her show a woman pity.

CHIRON

What, wouldest thou have me prove myself a bastard?

LAVINIA

155 'Tis true; the raven doth not hatch a lark:
Yet have I heard,--O, could I find it now!--
The lion moved with pity did endure
To have his princely paws pared all away:
Some say that ravens foster forlorn children,
160 The whilst their own birds famish in their nests:
O, be to me, though thy hard heart say no,
Nothing so kind, but something pitiful!

TAMORA

I know not what it means; away with her!

LAVINIA

O, let me teach thee! for my father's sake,
165 That gave thee life, when well he might have
slain thee,
Be not obdurate, open thy deaf ears.

TAMORA

Hadst thou in person ne'er offended me,
Even for his sake am I pitiless.
170 Remember, boys, I pour'd forth tears in vain,
To save your brother from the sacrifice;
But fierce Andronicus would not relent;
Therefore, away with her, and use her as you will,
The worse to her, the better loved of me.

LAVINIA

175 O Tamora, be call'd a gentle queen,
And with thine own hands kill me in this place!
For 'tis not life that I have begg'd so long;
Poor I was slain when Bassianus died.

CHIRON

And if she does, I'd rather be a eunuch 11. Drag her
husband to some secret hole, and we'll rape her on his
dead body.

11 A "eunuch" is a castrated man.

TAMORA

But when you have the honey you want, don't let the wasp
live to sting us.

CHIRON

I promise you, madam, we'll make sure of that. Come,
mistress, now we'll enjoy that "honesty" of yours that
you're so anxious to preserve.

LAVINIA

Oh, Tamora! You have the face of a woman--

TAMORA

I will not listen to her speak; take her away!

LAVINIA

Sweet lords, just let me say one thing to her.

DEMETRIUS

Listen, dear madam; it's your glory to see her cry. Let her
tears fall like rain on your heart of stone.

LAVINIA

Since when did the tiger's cubs teach their mother? Oh,
don't teach her how to be angry; she taught you how--the
milk you sucked from her turned to marble, and even at her
breast you learned cruelty. But not every mother breeds the
same sons--

[To CHIRON] Beg her to show me a woman's pity.

CHIRON

What, and show myself a bastard? I'm my mother's son.

LAVINIA

It's true; a raven can't give birth to a lark. But I've heard--
oh, if only this could happen now!--that the lion has cut off
his claws for pity, and that ravens have cared for orphaned
children while their own birds starved in their nests. Oh, be
to me--although your hard heart says no--if not as kind,
then at least a bit merciful!

TAMORA

I don't know what she means; take her away!

LAVINIA

Oh, let me explain myself! For my father's sake--since he
didn't kill you when he might have done so--listen to me.

TAMORA

Even if you had never offended me yourself (which you
have), I'm merciless for his sake. Remember, boys, how I
begged and cried in vain to save your brother from the
sacrifice, but fierce Andronicus would not show pity. So
take her away, and do whatever you want with her: the
worse you treat her, the more I'll love you.

LAVINIA

Oh, Tamora, be a gentle queen, and kill me with your own
hands in this place! For it isn't my life that I've been begging
for--I was killed when Bassianus died.

TAMORA

What begg'st thou, then? fond woman, let me go.

LAVINIA

180 'Tis present death I beg; and one thing more
That womanhood denies my tongue to tell:
O, keep me from their worse than killing lust,
And tumble me into some loathsome pit,
Where never man's eye may behold my body:
185 Do this, and be a charitable murderer.

TAMORA

So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee:
No, let them satisfy their lust on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Away! for thou hast stay'd us here too long.

LAVINIA

No grace? no womanhood? Ah, beastly creature!
190 The blot and enemy to our general name!
Confusion fall--

CHIRON

Nay, then I'll stop your mouth. Bring thou her husband:
This is the hole where Aaron bid us hide him.

DEMETRIUS throws the body of BASSIANUS into the pit; then exeunt DEMETRIUS and CHIRON, dragging off LAVINIA

TAMORA

195 Farewell, my sons: see that you make her sure.
Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed,
Till all the Andronici be made away.
Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor,
And let my spleenful sons this trull deflow'r.

Exit

Re-enter AARON, with QUINTUS and MARTIUS

AARON

200 Come on, my lords, the better foot before:
Straight will I bring you to the loathsome pit
Where I espied the panther fast asleep.

QUINTUS

My sight is very dull, whate'er it bodes.

MARTIUS

205 And mine, I promise you; were't not for shame,
Well could I leave our sport to sleep awhile.

Falls into the pit

QUINTUS

What art thou fall'n? What subtle hole is this,
Whose mouth is cover'd with rude-growing briars,
Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood
210 As fresh as morning dew distill'd on flowers?
A very fatal place it seems to me.
Speak, brother, hast thou hurt thee with the fall?

MARTIUS

O brother, with the dismal'st object hurt
That ever eye with sight made heart lament!

AARON

215 *[Aside]* Now will I fetch the king to find them here,
That he thereby may give a likely guess

TAMORA

What are you asking for, then? Stupid girl, let me go.

LAVINIA

It's death now that I beg for--and one thing more, that I can barely speak for modesty's sake. Oh, keep me from their lust, which is worse than killing me, and throw me into some loathsome pit where no one will ever see my body. Do this, and be a charitable murderer.

TAMORA

But if I did that, I would rob my sweet sons of their reward.
No, I'll let them satisfy their lust with you.

DEMETRIUS

Come on! You've kept us here too long.

LAVINIA

No pity? No womanhood? Oh, foul creature, a blot on the name of all women! May you--

CHIRON

No, then I'll stop you from talking anymore.

[To DEMETRIUS] Bring her husband's body; this is the hole where Aaron told us to throw him.

*DEMETRIUS throws the body of BASSIANUS into the pit;
then DEMETRIUS and CHIRON exit, dragging off LAVINIA.*

TAMORA

Goodbye, my sons; make sure she isn't a threat to us. I'll never be happy until all the Andronici family are dead. Now I'll go find my lovely Moor, and let my angry sons enjoy their prize.

TAMORA exits.

AARON re-enters with QUINTUS and MARTIUS.

AARON

Come on, my lords, quickly: I'll bring you to the foul pit where I saw a panther fast asleep.

QUINTUS

My eyelids are very heavy, whatever that means.

MARTIUS

And mine, too; if I weren't embarrassed to do so, I would stop hunting and sleep for a bit.

MARTIUS falls into the pit.

QUINTUS

Where have you fallen? What sort of hole is this, covered in branches with blood on their leaves like the morning dew on flowers? It seems like a very deadly place to me. Tell me, brother, did you hurt yourself when you fell?

MARTIUS

Oh, brother, I've seen something that hurt me worse than anything I've seen before!

AARON

[To himself] Now I'll bring the king, who, when he finds them here, will assume that they killed his brother.

How these were they that made away his brother.

Exit

AARON exits.

MARTIUS

Why dost not comfort me, and help me out
From this unhallowed and blood-stained hole?

220

QUINTUS

I am surprised with an uncouth fear;
A chilling sweat o'er-runs my trembling joints:
My heart suspects more than mine eye can see.

MARTIUS

To prove thou hast a true-divining heart,
Aaron and thou look down into this den,
And see a fearful sight of blood and death.

225

QUINTUS

Aaron is gone; and my compassionate heart
Will not permit mine eyes once to behold
The thing whereat it trembles by surmise;
O, tell me how it is; for ne'er till now
Was I a child to fear I know not what.

230

MARTIUS

Lord Bassianus lies embrewed here,
All on a heap, like to a slaughter'd lamb,
In this detested, dark, blood-drinking pit.

QUINTUS

If it be dark, how dost thou know 'tis he?

235

MARTIUS

Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
A precious ring, that lightens all the hole,
Which, like a taper in some monument,
Doth shine upon the dead man's earthy cheeks,
And shows the ragged entrails of the pit:
So pale did shine the moon on Pyramus
When he by night lay bathed in maiden blood.
O brother, help me with thy fainting hand--
If fear hath made thee faint, as me it hath--
Out of this fell devouring receptacle,
As hateful as Cocytus' misty mouth.

240

245

QUINTUS

Reach me thy hand, that I may help thee out;
Or, wanting strength to do thee so much good,
I may be pluck'd into the swallowing womb
Of this deep pit, poor Bassianus' grave.
I have no strength to pluck thee to the brink.

250

MARTIUS

Nor I no strength to climb without thy help.

255

QUINTUS

Thy hand once more; I will not loose again,
Till thou art here aloft, or I below:
Thou canst not come to me: I come to thee.

Falls in

Enter SATURNINUS with AARON

SATURNINUS

Along with me: I'll see what hole is here,
And what he is that now is leap'd into it.
Say who art thou that lately didst descend
Into this gaping hollow of the earth?

260

AARON exits.

MARTIUS

Why don't you help me out of this horrible blood-stained
hole?

QUINTUS

I am paralyzed with fear; I feel a cold sweat all over my
body, and my heart suspects more than I can see at the
moment.

MARTIUS

You're right to be afraid: if you and Aaron look into this
hole, you'll see blood and death.

QUINTUS

Aaron is gone; I'm afraid to look at the thing I fear. Oh, tell
me when you see; before now I was never so childish as to
fear something I couldn't see.

MARTIUS

Lord Bassianus lies here like a slaughtered lamb, in this
horrible, dark, blood-soaked pit.

QUINTUS

If it's dark, how do you know it's him?

MARTIUS

He wears a ring on his bloody finger that lights the hole like
a flaming candle in a tomb, shining on his cheeks and
showing the disgusting insides of the pit. The moon shined
like that on Pyramus ¹², covered in a maiden's blood at
night. Oh, brother, help me out of here with your weak
hand--if fear has made you weak too, as it has me--so that I
can get out of this foul hole, as horrible as the mouth of
Cocytus ¹³.

¹² The reference to the "moon on Pyramus" in the original text alludes again to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*--Pyramus is covered in the blood of his lover, Thisbe, when she stabs herself after finding his dead body one night.

¹³ "Cocytus" is one of the rivers of Hades, the mythological underworld.

QUINTUS

Give me your hand, so that I can help you. Or, if I don't have
the strength to lift you out, I'll fall into this pit (this womb
that swallows instead of giving life and has become
Bassianus's grave) with you. I don't have enough strength
to pull you to the top.

MARTIUS

And I don't have the strength to climb without your help.

QUINTUS

Give me your hand again; I won't let go until you're up here
or I'm down there. You can't come to me--I'll come to you.

QUINTUS falls in the pit.

SATURNINUS enters with AARON.

SATURNINUS

Come follow me; I'll see what kind of hole this is, and who
just leaped into it.

*[Calling down into the hole] Who are you down there, who
just jumped in?*

MARTIUS

The unhappy son of old Andronicus:
Brought hither in a most unlucky hour,
To find thy brother Bassianus dead.

SATURNINUS

My brother dead! I know thou dost but jest:
265 He and his lady both are at the lodge
Upon the north side of this pleasant chase;
'Tis not an hour since I left him there.

MARTIUS

We know not where you left him all alive;
But, out, alas! here have we found him dead.

270

Re-enter TAMORA, with Attendants; TITUS ANDRONICUS, and Lucius

TAMORA

Where is my lord the king?

SATURNINUS

Here, Tamora, though grieved with killing grief.

TAMORA

Where is thy brother Bassianus?

SATURNINUS

Now to the bottom dost thou search my wound:
275 Poor Bassianus here lies murdered.

TAMORA

Then all too late I bring this fatal writ,
The complot of this timeless tragedy;
And wonder greatly that man's face can fold
In pleasing smiles such murderous tyranny.

She giveth SATURNINUS a letter

SATURNINUS

280 [Reads] 'An if we miss to meet him handsomely--
Sweet huntsman, Bassianus 'tis we mean--
Do thou so much as dig the grave for him:
Thou know'st our meaning. Look for thy reward
Among the nettles at the elder-tree
285 Which overshades the mouth of that same pit
Where we decreed to bury Bassianus.
Do this, and purchase us thy lasting friends.'
O Tamora! was ever heard the like?
This is the pit, and this the elder-tree.
290 Look, sirs, if you can find the huntsman out
That should have murdered Bassianus here.

AARON

My gracious lord, here is the bag of gold.

SATURNINUS

[To TITUS] Two of thy whelps, fell curs of
bloody kind,
295 Have here bereft my brother of his life.
Sirs, drag them from the pit unto the prison:
There let them bide until we have devised
Some never-heard-of torturing pain for them.

TAMORA

What, are they in this pit? O wondrous thing!
300 How easily murder is discovered!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

High emperor, upon my feeble knee
I beg this boon, with tears not lightly shed,
That this fell fault of my accursed sons,
Accursed if the fault be proved in them,--

MARTIUS

The unlucky son of old Andronicus, who stumbling on this
hole has found the dead body of your brother Bassianus.

SATURNINUS

My brother dead! I know you must be joking--he and his
wife are both back at the lodge on the north side of the
forest; I saw them an hour ago.

MARTIUS

We don't know where you left him alive. But out here--God
forbid--we found him dead.

*TAMORA re-enters with servants, TITUS ANDRONICUS, and
LUCIUS.*

TAMORA

Where is my lord, the king?

SATURNINUS

Here, Tamora, although greatly distressed.

TAMORA

Where is your brother Bassianus?

SATURNINUS

Now you've hit on the subject of my suffering: poor
Bassianus lies in this hole, murdered.

TAMORA

Then I'm too late in showing you this letter, which reveals
the whole plot! I'm shocked that people can smile and be
so murderous.

She gives SATURNINUS a letter.

SATURNINUS

[Reads] "And if we fail to meet him on the hunt--meaning
Bassianus--just dig the grave for him: you understand us.
Your money is buried by the elder-tree near the same pit
where we decided to bury Bassianus. If you do this, we'll be
your friends for life."

[To TAMORA] Oh, Tamora! Have you ever heard anything
like this? This is the pit, and this is the elder-tree.

[To servants] Find the hunter that planned to murder
Bassianus here!

AARON

My gracious lord, here's the bag of gold.

SATURNINUS

[To TITUS] Two of your sons, bloody dogs, have killed my
brother here. Drag them from the pit and put them in
prison, and leave them there until I've invented some
previously unheard-of torture for them.

TAMORA

What, are they in this pit? Oh, it's amazing how easy it is to
solve murders!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Mighty emperor, I beg on my knees with tears not easily
shed. If this foul crime of my cursed sons--cursed if they're
guilty of it--

SATURNINUS

305 If it be proved! you see it is apparent.
Who found this letter? Tamora, was it you?

TAMORA

Andronicus himself did take it up.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I did, my lord: yet let me be their bail;
For, by my father's reverend tomb, I vow
310 They shall be ready at your highness' will
To answer their suspicion with their lives.

SATURNINUS

Thou shalt not bail them: see thou follow me.
Some bring the murder'd body, some the murderers:
Let them not speak a word; the guilt is plain;
315 For, by my soul, were there worse end than death,
That end upon them should be executed.

TAMORA

Andronicus, I will entreat the king;
Fear not thy sons; they shall do well enough.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, Lucius, come; stay not to talk with them.

320

Exeunt

SATURNINUS

If they're guilty! It's obvious that they are. Who found this letter? Tamora, was it you?

TAMORA

Andronicus himself found it in the woods.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I did, my lord. But let me bail them, and by my father's honored grave, I promise I'll produce them for the trial.

SATURNINUS

You won't bail them; follow me. Someone bring the dead body, and someone bring the murderers. Don't let them speak; their guilt is obvious. By God, if there were some worse fate than death, I'd punish them that way.

TAMORA

Andronicus, I'll advocate for you with the king. Don't worry for your sons; they'll be all right.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, Lucius; don't stay to talk with them.

All exit.

Act 2, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter DEMETRIUS and CHIRON with LAVINIA, ravished; her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out

DEMETRIUS

So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,
Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravish'd thee.

CHIRON

Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,
An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe.

DEMETRIUS

5 See, how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.

CHIRON

Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands.

DEMETRIUS

She hath no tongue to call, nor hands to wash;
And so let's leave her to her silent walks.

CHIRON

An 'twere my case, I should go hang myself.

DEMETRIUS

10 If thou hadst hands to help thee knit the cord.

Exeunt DEMETRIUS and CHIRON

Enter MARCUS

Shakescleare Translation

DEMETRIUS and CHIRON enter with LAVINIA, raped; her hands have been cut off and her tongue cut out.

DEMETRIUS

So, now go try to tell what happened--if your tongue can speak, say who cut out your tongue and raped you.

CHIRON

Write it down and explain yourself that way--if you can write with those stumps.

DEMETRIUS

See, she can say what she means by gesturing at us.

CHIRON

Go home, ask for sweet water to wash your hands.

DEMETRIUS

She has no tongue to speak and no hands to wash, so let's leave her to walk alone in silence.

CHIRON

If it were me, I'd hang myself.

DEMETRIUS

If you had hands to help you tie the knot.

DEMETRIUS and CHIRON exit.

MARCUS enters.

MARCUS

Who is this? my niece, that flies away so fast!
 Cousin, a word; where is your husband?
 If I do dream, would all my wealth would wake me!
 15 If I do wake, some planet strike me down,
 That I may slumber in eternal sleep!
 Speak, gentle niece, what stern ungentle hands
 Have lopp'd and hew'd and made thy body bare
 Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments,
 20 Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in,
 And might not gain so great a happiness
 As have thy love? Why dost not speak to me?
 Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
 Like to a bubbling fountain stirr'd with wind,
 25 Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,
 Coming and going with thy honey breath.
 But, sure, some Tereus hath deflowered thee,
 And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue.
 Ah, now thou turn'st away thy face for shame!
 30 And, notwithstanding all this loss of blood,
 As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,
 Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face
 Blushing to be encountered with a cloud.
 Shall I speak for thee? shall I say 'tis so?
 35 O, that I knew thy heart; and knew the beast,
 That I might rail at him, to ease my mind!
 Sorrow concealed, like an oven stopp'd,
 Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is.
 Fair Philomela, she but lost her tongue,
 40 And in a tedious sampler sew'd her mind:
 But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee;
 A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,
 And he hath cut those pretty fingers off,
 That could have better sew'd than Philomel.
 45 O, had the monster seen those lily hands
 Tremble, like aspen-leaves, upon a lute,
 And make the silken strings delight to kiss them,
 He would not then have touch'd them for his life!
 Or, had he heard the heavenly harmony
 50 Which that sweet tongue hath made,
 He would have dropp'd his knife, and fell asleep
 As Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet.
 Come, let us go, and make thy father blind;
 For such a sight will blind a father's eye:
 55 One hour's storm will drown the fragrant meads;
 What will whole months of tears thy father's eyes?
 Do not draw back, for we will mourn with thee
 O, could our mourning ease thy misery!

*Exeunt**They both exit.***MARCUS**

Who is this? *[Sees LAVINIA]* My niece, running away from me so fast! Cousin, wait; where's your husband? If I'm dreaming, I would give everything I own to wake up from this nightmare! And if I did wake up, I'd want to die rather than see this. Tell me, sweet niece, who has cut off those two branches, your arms, which kings have desired to sleep in, and thought there could be no greater happiness than to have your love? Why don't you speak to me? Oh, a red river of blood falls from your lips like a fountain, stirred by the wind of your sweet breath. Surely some Tereus 1 has raped you, and, to stop you from naming him, has cut out your tongue. Ah, now you turn away your face, ashamed, and you blush--although you've lost so much blood already from three different spouts. Your cheeks are as red as the sun, that blushes when hidden by a cloud. Can I speak for you? Can I say that I have it right? Oh, I wish I knew what was in your heart--and that I knew the beast who did this, so that I could vent my rage at him. Unexpressed sorrow burns the heart to ashes. Fair Philomela just lost her tongue, and sewed a picture of what was done to her; but, lovely niece, that method won't work for you, since a more cunning Tereus has cut off those pretty fingers that could have sewed better than Philomel. Oh, if the monster had seen those white hands play the lute 2 and make the strings themselves want to kiss them, he would not have touched them were his life at stake! Or if he'd heard the sweet music of your voice, he would have dropped his knife and fallen asleep like Cerberus at the feet of the Thracian poet 3. Come with me, let's find your father, and make him blind--for such a sight would blind any father's eye with tears. An hour of rain can drown a meadow; what will whole months of tears do to your father's eyes? Don't move away, but come with me, for we'll mourn with you. Oh, if only our mourning could ease your misery!

1 Remember that Tereus is the character from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who rapes Philomel.

2 The "lute" was a popular instrument in Elizabethan England, and is similar to a small guitar.

3 "Cerberus" is the three-headed dog that guards the gate to Hades. The "Thracian poet," Orpheus, charmed him to sleep by playing his harp.

Act 3, Scene 1**Shakespeare**

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;
 5 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.
 10 For two and twenty sons I never wept,
 Because they died in honour's lofty bed.

Shakescleare Translation

Judges, Senators and Tribunes enter with MARTIUS and QUINTUS, in chains, heading to the place of execution. Titus follows them, pleading.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Listen to me, respected men! Noble tribunes, wait! Take pity on me--for my lost youth, which I spent in dangerous wars while you slept securely at home; for all the blood I've spilled for Rome; for all the cold nights when I stayed up guarding the camp; for the bitter tears that now run down my wrinkled cheeks--and have mercy on my sons, who are more innocent than you think. I never cried for my twenty-two sons who died before, because they died with honor.

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

TITUS ANDRONICUS

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;
15 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;
20 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

TITUS ANDRONICUS

O reverend tribunes! O gentle, aged men!
Unbind my sons, reverse the doom of death;
25 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

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

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,
35 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:
40 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
45 stones;
A stone is silent, and offendeth not,
And tribunes with their tongues doom men to death.

Rises

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But wherefore stand'st thou with thy weapon drawn?

LUCIUS

50 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
55 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

TITUS lies down on the ground; the Judges, Tribunes, and others pass by him and exit.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But for these sons, tribunes, I cry so that my tears write my sorrow in the dust, quenching the earth's thirst. The sweet blood of my sons will make it blush with shame. Oh earth, if you refuse to drink the blood of my dear sons, I'll give you more rain from my ancient eyes than you ever got in April. In the drought of summer I'll rain on you still, and in winter I'll melt the snow with my warm tears and make it eternally spring, if you refuse to drink my dear sons' blood.

LUCIUS enters with his sword drawn.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, powerful tribunes! Oh, merciful old men! Release my sons, take back the sentence of death, and let me say--a man who never cried before--that my tears moved you.

LUCIUS

Oh, noble father, there's no point going on like this, for the tribunes can't hear. No one is here, and you're only talking to the stones.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Ah, Lucius, let me plead for your brothers. Honorable tribunes, I beg you once again--

LUCIUS

My gracious lord, none of the tribunes can hear you.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, it doesn't matter if they hear me, man, for they wouldn't listen to me--or if they did listen, they wouldn't have mercy. But I have to beg nonetheless. So I tell my sorrows to the stones, which--although they can't answer me--in some ways are better than the tribunes. For they don't interrupt my story; when I cry, they seem to cry with me, as my tears trickle down the stones. If they were dressed in mourning clothes, there would be no better tribunes in Rome. A stone is soft as wax, when tribunes are harder than stones. A stone is silent, and never offends, while tribunes doom men to death when they speak.

TITUS stands up.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But why are you standing with your weapon drawn?

LUCIUS

To rescue my two brothers from their death sentence--and for that, the judges have banished me from Rome for life.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, happy man! They've done you a favor--foolish Lucius, don't you see that Rome is just a wilderness of tigers? Tigers must kill, and there's no better prey than me and my family. You're fortunate, then, to be banished from this place. But who comes here with my brother Marcus?

MARCUS and LAVINIA enter.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

60 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

65 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?
70 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,
And now like Nilus, it disdaineth bounds.
Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too;
75 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
80 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
85 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

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

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It was my deer; and he that wounded her
Hath hurt me more than had he killed me dead:
95 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.
100 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.
105 Had I but seen thy picture in this plight,
It would have madded 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:
110 Thy husband he is dead: and for his death
Thy brothers are condemn'd, and dead by this.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Titus, prepare your eyes to weep; or, if you don't cry, for
your noble heart to break. I bring all-consuming sorrow to
you in your old age.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Will sorrow consume me? Let me see it, then.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

This was your daughter.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, Marcus, so she is.

LUCIUS

Oh, this sight kills me!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Faint-hearted boy, get up and look at her. Speak, Lavinia,
and tell us what hand has made you handless? What fool
has added water to the sea, or brought another torch to
burning Troy? For my grief was already at its height before
you came, and now like Nilus , overflows all bounds. Give
me a sword and I'll chop off my hands too, for they have
fought for Rome in vain and kept me alive to suffer; I've
held them up in prayer, and they've been no use at all. So
now all I ask is that one will do me the favor of cutting off
the other. It's good that you have no hands, Lavinia, since
hands are useless in doing any service for Rome.

 "Nilus" is the god of the Nile river
in Egypt, which floods every year.

LUCIUS

Tell us, sweet sister: who did this to you?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, her tongue--that spoke her thoughts so pleasingly--is
torn from her mouth, where it sung like a sweet songbird in
a pretty cage, enchanting everyone!

LUCIUS

Oh, then speak for her--who did this?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

She was already like this when I found her. She was
wandering in the park trying to hide herself, like a deer
that's received a death wound.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It was my deer, and whoever wounded her has hurt me
worse than if he'd killed me. It's as if I'm standing on a rock
surrounded by the sea, watching the tide surge and
expecting that each wave will be the one that drowns me.
My poor sons are sent to death; my other son is banished;
my brother cries for our misfortune. But dear Lavinia--more
precious than my soul--gives me the greatest suffering. If I
had just seen a picture of you like this, I would have gone
mad; what can I do now that I see it in real life? You have no
hands to wipe away your tears or tongue to tell me who did
this to you; your husband is dead, and your brothers are
condemned to death for killing him. Look, Marcus! Oh,
Lucius, look at her! When I mentioned her brothers, new
tears appeared on her cheeks like honeydew on an almost-
withered flower.

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.

115

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

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

TITUS ANDRONICUS

If they did kill thy husband, then be joyful
Because the law hath ta'en revenge on them.
120 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,
125 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
130 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?
135 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

140 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

145 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.
150 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,
155 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

O gracious emperor! O gentle Aaron!
160 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?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Perhaps she cries because they killed her husband, or
perhaps because she knows they're innocent.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

If they did kill your husband, then you should be pleased
that they've been brought to justice. But no, no, they
wouldn't do something so awful; look how sad their sister
looks. Sweet Lavinia, let me kiss your lips. Or give some sign
to tell me how I can help: should your uncle, your brother
Lucius, and I sit around a fountain and weep, so that we see
the reflection of our tear-streaked cheeks, like a meadow
streaked with slime after a flood? And should we look into
the fountain so long that its fresh water turns salty from our
tears? Or should we cut off our own hands, like yours? Or
should we stop speaking, and spend the rest of our hateful
lives miming at each other? What should we do? Let those
of us that still have our tongues plan how to be so
miserable that future ages will marvel at us.

LUCIUS

Sweet father, stop crying; for, seeing you cry, look how my
poor sister sobs and weeps.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Calm yourself, dear niece. Good Titus, dry your eyes.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, Marcus, Marcus! Brother, I know that your handkerchief
can't dry my tears, since it's already so wet with your own.

LUCIUS

Oh, my Lavinia, I'll wipe your cheeks.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Look, Marcus, look! I understand her signs--if she could
talk, she'd say to your brother what I just said to you: his
handkerchief, also soaked in his tears, won't help her sad
cheeks. Oh, this is a fellowship of suffering, as far from help
as Limbo ² is from heaven!

² "Limbo" is the outer edge of hell;
a place suspended between the
torments of hell's lower circles and
the bliss of heaven.

AARON enters.

AARON

Titus Andronicus, my lord the emperor sends a message--if
you love your sons, you, Marcus, Lucius, or any of your
family should chop off your hand and send it to the king.
With that ransom for their crime, he'll send both your sons
back to you alive.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, generous emperor! Oh, sweet Aaron! Has a raven ever
sounded so much like a lark that sings at sunrise? With all
my heart, I'll send the emperor my hand; good Aaron, will
you help 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

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;

LUCIUS

Wait, father! Your noble hand--that has defeated so many
 enemies--shouldn't be sent. My hand will serve the
 purpose. I'm young and can spare the loss of blood more
 easily, and so my hand should save my brothers' lives.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Which of your hands hasn't defended Rome, wielding a
 bloody battle axe and wreaking destruction on the enemy's
 castle? Oh, both are deserving. My hand has been merely
 idle; if it ransoms my two nephews from their death, then
 it's done something useful.

AARON

Come on, figure out whose hand should be sent, lest they
 die before their pardon comes.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My hand will go.

LUCIUS

By God, it won't go!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Sirs, stop fighting; my hands are like withered herbs that
 need to be plucked out of the garden. So we'll send one of
 mine.

LUCIUS

Dear father, if I'm ever worthy to be called your son, let me
 save my brothers from death.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

And, now for the sake of our parents, let me show you a
 brother's love.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

All right, I'll spare my hand; you two figure it out.

LUCIUS

Then I'll go get an axe.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

But I'll be the one to use it.

LUCIUS and MARCUS exit.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come quickly, Aaron; I'll deceive them both. Lend me your
 hand, and I'll give you mine.

AARON

[*To himself*] If this is called lying, then I'll be honest, and
 never lie to men like this as long as I live. But I'll trick you
 another way, as you'll see less than half an hour from now.

AARON cuts off TITUS's hand.

LUCIUS and MARCUS re-enter.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Now stop fighting: what's done is done. Good Aaron, give
 his majesty my hand. Tell him it was a hand that defended
 him from a thousand dangers; ask him to bury it, since it
 deserved more than this. As for my sons, say I think of this
 as a good exchange, jewels for a cheap price--although
 precious, too, since I've bought back my own ³.

³ Titus has given up his own hand for his "own" sons. They are flesh of his flesh.

And yet dear too, because I bought mine own.

AARON

I go, Andronicus: and for thy hand
205 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!
210 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,
215 To that I call!
[To LAVINIA]
What, wilt thou kneel with me?
Do, then, dear heart; for heaven shall hear our
220 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,
225 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,
230 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?
235 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;
240 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
245 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
250 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;
255 But sorrow flouted at is double death.

AARON

I'll go, Andronicus; and in exchange for your hand, you'll soon have your sons with you.

[To himself] Their heads, I mean. Oh, the very thought of this villainy delights me even before I've done it! Let fools do good deeds, and fair men call for mercy. Aaron will have his soul as black as his face.

AARON exits.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, now I lift my one hand up to pray to heaven, and kneel on the ground with my feeble body: if any power pities the tears of the miserable, I call on that!

[To LAVINIA] What, will you kneel with me? Do then, dear heart, for heaven will hear our prayers: we'll break the dim sky with our sighs and stain the sun with the fog of our tears, as when it's overshadowed by rain clouds.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, brother, be rational and don't break into these fits of extreme passion.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Isn't my sorrow deep, since there's no end to it? Then let my passions be bottomless as well.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

But still, let reason govern your sorrow.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

If there were anything reasonable about these miseries, then I could bind my grief within reasonable limits. When heaven weeps, doesn't the earth overflow with rain? If the winds blow hard, don't the waves get higher, threatening the swollen face of the sky? And would you like me to tell you the reason for this storm? I am the sea; see how Lavinia's sighs blow. She is the weeping sky, and I'm the earth. My sea must be moved with her sighs, and my earth must drown with her continual tears. I can't hide her sorrow in my bowels, but must vomit it up like a drunken man. Then give me permission, for losers must give relief to their stomachs by talking bitterly.

A MESSENGER enters, carrying two heads and a hand.

MESSENGER

Worthy Andronicus, you've gotten a poor reward for the good hand you sent the emperor. Here are the heads of your two noble sons, and here's your hand, sent back to you in contempt; your sorrow is a joke to them, and your sacrifice is mocked. It's worse for me to think of what you've suffered than remembering the death of my own father.

MESSENGER exits.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Now let hot Etna cool in Sicily, and let my heart burn like hell forever! These miseries are too much to bear. To cry with those who cry does some help, but to mock sorrow is like dying twice.

 Mount "Etna" (Aetna in the original text) is an active volcano in Sicily.

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

260 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,
265 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:
270 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

275 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,
And would usurp upon my watery eyes
And make them blind with tributary tears:
280 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.
285 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;
290 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:
295 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:
300 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
305 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,
310 To be revenged on Rome and Saturnine.

LUCIUS

Ah, how can I still be alive after this sight has made such a deep wound in me? Oh, life is no more than a living death, when the only thing that tells us we're still alive is that we breathe in and out.

LAVINIA kisses TITUS.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, poor heart, that kiss can't give any more comfort than frozen water to a starved snake.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

When will we wake up from this horrible dream?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Now I'll speak plainly. Die, Andronicus, for you're not asleep. Look at your two sons' heads, your brave hand, your mangled daughter here, your other banished son struck pale with the sight, your brother--me--like a stone, cold and numb. Oh, now I won't try to calm you down; tear off your silver hair, bite your one remaining hand with your teeth, and let this sad sight kill us here. Now is the time to despair; why are you so quiet?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Ha, ha, ha!

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Why are you laughing? It doesn't fit the mood.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, I don't have another tear to shed. Besides, this sorrow is an enemy, which would make my eyes weak by blinding them with tears--how will I find Revenge's cave then? For these two heads seem to speak to me, threatening that I'll never be happy again until I take revenge by returning all these offenses in kind, back down the throats of those who have wronged us. Come, let's see what I have to do. You sad people, circle around me, so that I can turn to each of you and swear on my soul to take revenge on your behalf. The vow is made.

[To MARCUS] Come, brother, take a head, and in this hand I'll carry the other.

[To LAVINIA] Lavinia, you'll have a job too--these arms! Carry my hand between your teeth, sweet girl.

[To LUCIUS] As for you, boy, get out of my sight; you're banished, and must not stay. Go to the Goths and raise an army there, and if you love me--as I think you do--let's kiss and say goodbye, for we have much to do.

TITUS, MARCUS, and LAVINIA exit.

LUCIUS

Goodbye, Andronicus, my noble father and the saddest man that ever lived in Rome. Goodbye, proud Rome. Until Lucius comes again, he leaves behind a promise to return, dearer than his life. Farewell, Lavinia, my noble sister: oh, if only you were like you were before! But now neither Lucius nor Lavinia lives, except in grief and despair. As long as Lucius lives, he will fight for justice for you, and make proud Saturnine and his empress beg at the gates like Tarquin and his queen ⁵. Now I'll go to the Goths, and raise an army to take revenge on Rome and Saturnine.

⁵ "Tarquin," previously mentioned as Lucrece's rapist, was also the last king of Rome in history and legend. His tyrannical reign ended with an uprising that eventually established the Roman Republic.

[Exit](#)*LUCIUS* exits.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

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:
5 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;
Who, when my heart, all mad with misery,
10 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!
15 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;
20 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

25 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,
30 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,
35 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,
40 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,
45 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

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

Shakescleare Translation

TITUS, MARCUS, LAVINIA enter with Young LUCIUS  , a boy.

 *Young Lucius is the son of Lucius, and Titus's grandson.*

TITUS ANDRONICUS

There, there. Sit down. And make sure you eat no more than will keep us alive long enough to take revenge on our enemies. Marcus, unfold your arms: your niece and I, poor creatures, lack hands and can't show ten times more sadness by standing like that. Instead, I have to beat my breast with my poor remaining right hand. My heart beats in the hollow prison of my body, enraged with misery, and I thump it down.

[To LAVINIA] You map of grief  , talking in sign language! When your poor heart beats fast, you can't strike your chest to make it quiet. Try sighing, my girl, or kill it with groans. Or take a little knife between your teeth and make a hole against your heart, so all the tears that fall from your poor eyes may run in and drown it.

 *A "map," like Lavinia, communicates with the viewer through signs.*

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Brother, stop! Don't tell her how to lay violent hands on herself.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh! Has sorrow already made you mad? Why, Marcus, no man should be mad but me. What violent hands can she lay on her life? Why do you use the word "hands?" That's like asking Aeneas to tell the story again of how Troy was burnt and he lost everything. Oh, don't say anything about hands, lest we remember that we don't have any. Ha, but I'm talking foolishly--as if we could forget we have no hands, just because Marcus didn't mention it! Come, let's eat. And gentle girl, eat this--what, you won't drink? Hear what she says, Marcus; I can interpret all her signs. She says she'll drink nothing but the tears on her cheeks, brewed with her sorrow.

[To LAVINIA] Speechless victim, I will learn your thoughts; your silent actions will be as clear in meaning to me as the prayers of hermits. You won't sigh, or hold your stumps to heaven, or wink, or nod, or kneel, or make a sign without me understanding you: I'll make an alphabet of these actions, and I'll learn to know what you mean.

YOUNG LUCIUS

Good grandfather, stop this bitter sadness; make my aunt laugh with some pleasing story.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, the sweet boy, moved by compassion, cries to see his grandfather's grief.

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

TITUS ANDRONICUS

55 What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?

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:
60 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
70 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,
75 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.
80 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,
85 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,
90 And thou shalt read when mine begin to dazzle.

Exeunt

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Calm down, innocent boy; you are made of tears, and tears
will melt away your life.

MARCUS stabs his dinner dish with a knife.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What do you strike at with your knife, Marcus?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I struck at a fly, my lord, which I killed.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Get out, murderer! You kill my heart; my eyes are filled with
tears at seeing this cruelty. The murder of the innocent
doesn't become Titus's brother; get out, since I see you
aren't fit for my company.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, I've only killed a fly.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But what if that fly had a father and mother? He would fly
on his slender golden wings, buzzing sad songs in the air!
Poor harmless fly, that, with his pretty buzzing song, came
here to make us happy! And you have killed him.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Forgive me, sir; it was a black ugly fly that looked like the
empress's Moor, which was why I killed him.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, oh, oh, then forgive me for attaching you, for you've
done a good deed. Give me your knife, and I'll butcher him,
pretending it's the Moor come here to poison me. *[Stabs the
fly.]* Here's for you, and that's for Tamora. Ah, bastard! At
least we're not so low; between us we can still kill a fly that
looks like a coal-black Moor.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, poor man! He is so grief-stricken that he imagines
shadows are the real thing.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, let's go. Lavinia, come with me; I'll go to your room
and read sad stories of old times with you.

[To LUCIUS] Come with me, too, boy; your young eyes can
read when my own begin to fade.

All exit.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter YOUNG LUCIUS, and LAVINIA running after him, and the boy flies
from her, with books under his arm. Then enter TITUS and MARCUS

Shakescleare Translation

YOUNG LUCIUS enters with books under his arm, with
LAVINIA running after him. TITUS and MARCUS enter after
them.

YOUNG LUCIUS

Help, grandsire, help! my aunt Lavinia
Follows me every where, I know not why:
Good uncle Marcus, see how swift she comes.
Alas, sweet aunt, I know not what you mean.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

5 Stand by me, Lucius; do not fear thine aunt.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

She loves thee, boy, too well to do thee harm.

YOUNG LUCIUS

Ay, when my father was in Rome she did.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

What means my niece Lavinia by these signs?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Fear her not, Lucius: somewhat doth she mean:
10 See, Lucius, see how much she makes of thee:
Somewhither would she have thee go with her.
Ah, boy, Cornelia never with more care
Read to her sons than she hath read to thee
Sweet poetry and Tully's Orator.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

15 Canst thou not guess wherefore she plies thee thus?

YOUNG LUCIUS

My lord, I know not, I, nor can I guess,
Unless some fit or frenzy do possess her:
For I have heard my grandsire say full oft,
Extremity of griefs would make men mad;
20 And I have read that Hecuba of Troy
Ran mad through sorrow: that made me to fear;
Although, my lord, I know my noble aunt
Loves me as dear as e'er my mother did,
And would not, but in fury, fright my youth:
25 Which made me down to throw my books, and fly--
Causeless, perhaps. But pardon me, sweet aunt:
And, madam, if my uncle Marcus go,
I will most willingly attend your ladyship.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Lucius, I will.

30 *LAVINIA turns over with her stumps the books which LUCIUS has let fall*

TITUS ANDRONICUS

How now, Lavinia! Marcus, what means this?
Some book there is that she desires to see.
Which is it, girl, of these? Open them, boy.
But thou art deeper read, and better skill'd
35 Come, and take choice of all my library,
And so beguile thy sorrow, till the heavens
Reveal the damn'd contriver of this deed.
Why lifts she up her arms in sequence thus?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I think she means that there was more than one
40 Confederate in the fact: ay, more there was;
Or else to heaven she heaves them for revenge.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Lucius, what book is that she tosseth so?

YOUNG LUCIUS

Help, grandfather, help! My aunt Lavinia follows me
everywhere, but I don't know why. Uncle Marcus, see how
quickly she comes after me. Oh, sweet aunt, I don't know
what you mean.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Stand by me, Lucius; don't be afraid of your aunt.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

She loves you too much to hurt you, boy.

YOUNG LUCIUS

Yes, when my father was in Rome she did.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

What does my niece Lavinia mean by this sign language?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Don't be afraid of her, Lucius; she means something. See,
Lucius, how much she loves you; she wants you to go
somewhere with her. Oh, boy, *Cornelia*  never read to her
sons with so much care as Lavinia reads you sweet poetry
and *Tully's Orator*. 

 *Cornelia*, mother of the Gracchi brothers (Roman tribunes in the late 2nd century BC), was famous for her attention to her children's education.

 *Tully's Orator* was a famous rhetorical handbook—i.e., a book that taught students how to speak eloquently.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Can't you guess what she wants from you?

YOUNG LUCIUS

My lord, I don't know and I can't guess. Unless she's
suffering from some fit or madness, for I've often heard my
grandfather say that extreme grief makes people mad, and
I've read that *Hecuba of Troy*  went mad from sorrow.
That made me afraid--although, my lord, I know my noble
aunt loves me as dearly as my mother ever did, and would
only in madness have ever frightened me--and I threw
down my books and ran, but perhaps for no reason. Forgive
me, sweet aunt; and madam, if my uncle Marcus comes
with us, I'll gladly go with you.

 Remember that *Hecuba* was Queen of Troy during the Trojan War. Her grief over the death of her children and the destruction of Troy is the driving force behind Euripides's tragedy "Hecuba."

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Lucius, I will.

LUCIUS has dropped some books to the ground; LAVINIA begins to search through them with her stumps.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

What are you doing, Lavinia? Marcus, what does this mean?
She wants to see one of these books. Which book? Open
them, boy.

[To LAVINIA] You're a better reader than me--come and take any book from my library, and so distract yourself from your sorrow until the heavens reveal who did this to you. Why does she lift her arms up twice?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I think she means that there was more than one
this; yes, there was more than one. Unless she's praying to
heaven for revenge.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Lucius, which book is she searching through so frantically?

YOUNG LUCIUS

Grandsire, 'tis Ovid's Metamorphoses;
My mother gave it me.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

45 For love of her that's gone,
Perhaps she cull'd it from among the rest.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Soft! see how busily she turns the leaves!

Helping her

What would she find? Lavinia, shall I read?

50 This is the tragic tale of Philomel,
And treats of Tereus' treason and his rape:
And rape, I fear, was root of thine annoy.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

See, brother, see; note how she quotes the leaves.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Lavinia, wert thou thus surprised, sweet girl,
Ravish'd and wrong'd, as Philomela was,
Forced in the ruthless, vast, and gloomy woods? See,
see!
Ay, such a place there is, where we did hunt--
O, had we never, never hunted there!--
60 Pattern'd by that the poet here describes,
By nature made for murders and for rapes.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

O, why should nature build so foul a den,
Unless the gods delight in tragedies?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Give signs, sweet girl, for here are none
but friends,
What Roman lord it was durst do the deed:
Or slunk not Saturnine, as Tarquin erst,
That left the camp to sin in Lucrece' bed?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Sit down, sweet niece: brother, sit down by me.
70 Apollo, Pallas, Jove, or Mercury,
Inspire me, that I may this treason find!
My lord, look here: look here, Lavinia:
This sandy plot is plain; guide, if thou canst
This after me, when I have writ my name
75 Without the help of any hand at all.

He writes his name with his staff, and guides it with feet and mouth

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Cursed be that heart that forced us to this shift!
Write thou good niece; and here display, at last,
What God will have discover'd for revenge;
Heaven guide thy pen to print thy sorrows plain,
80 That we may know the traitors and the truth!

She takes the staff in her mouth, and guides it with her stumps, and writes

TITUS ANDRONICUS

O, do ye read, my lord, what she hath writ?
'Stuprum. Chiron. Demetrius.'

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

What, what! The lustful sons of Tamora
Performers of this heinous, bloody deed?

YOUNG LUCIUS

Grandfather, it's Ovid's Metamorphoses; my mother gave it to me.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Perhaps she chose it for love of Lucius's mother.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Look! See how quickly she turns the pages.

TITUS helps LAVINIA.

What is she looking for? Lavinia, do you want me to read?

This is the tragic story of Philomel, who was raped by
Tereus--and rape, I fear, was what happened to you.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

See, brother, see; look how she's pointing to particular
passages.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Lavinia, were you attacked, sweet girl, raped as Philomel
was in the silent, vast, and gloomy woods? Of course, of
course! Yes, there is a place like that, the wood where we
hunted--oh, I wish we had never, never hunted there!--just
like the one described by Ovid, made by nature for murder
and rape.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, why would nature create such a foul place, unless the
gods take delight in our suffering?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Give signs, sweet girl, for everyone here is your friend: what
Roman lord is responsible? Was it Saturnine--like Tarquin ⁴,
who left the camp to attack Lucrece?

⁴ Remember that (in several historical accounts), the tyrant Tarquin's rape of a Lucrece inspired a rebellion and the birth of the Roman republic.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Sit down, sweet niece: brother, sit down by me. May Apollo,
Pallas, Jove, or Mercury ⁵ inspire me, so that I can find
some way to expose the criminal! My lord, look; look at this,
Lavinia. This is a plain plot of sand; if I take this stick, I can
write my name without any hands at all. If you can, do what
I did.

He writes his name in the sand with his staff, guiding it with his feet and mouth.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Curses on the heart that forced us to this method! Write,
good niece; and tell us, at last, what God wants to be known
so that we can take revenge. Heaven will guide your pen to
show what happened, so that we may know the traitors and
the truth!

LAVINIA takes the staff in her mouth and writes, guiding it with her stumps.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, do you read, my lord, what she's written? "Rape.
Chiron. Demetrius."

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

What, what! The lustful sons of Tamora did this horrible,
bloody crime?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

85 Magni Dominator poli,
Tam lensus audis scelera? tam lensus vides?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

O, calm thee, gentle lord; although I know
There is enough written upon this earth
To stir a mutiny in the mildest thoughts
90 And arm the minds of infants to exclaims.
My lord, kneel down with me; Lavinia, kneel;
And kneel, sweet boy, the Roman Hector's hope;
And swear with me, as, with the woful fere
And father of that chaste dishonour'd dame,
95 Lord Junius Brutus sware for Lucrece' rape,
That we will prosecute by good advice
Mortal revenge upon these traitorous Goths,
And see their blood, or die with this reproach.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

'Tis sure enough, an you knew how.
100 But if you hunt these bear-whelps, then beware:
The dam will wake; and, if she wind you once,
She's with the lion deeply still in league,
And lulls him whilst she playeth on her back,
And when he sleeps will she do what she list.
105 You are a young huntsman, Marcus; let it alone;
And, come, I will go get a leaf of brass,
And with a gad of steel will write these words,
And lay it by: the angry northern wind
Will blow these sands, like Sibyl's leaves, abroad,
110 And where's your lesson, then? Boy, what say you?

YOUNG LUCIUS

I say, my lord, that if I were a man,
Their mother's bed-chamber should not be safe
For these bad bondmen to the yoke of Rome.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Ay, that's my boy! thy father hath full oft
115 For his ungrateful country done the like.

YOUNG LUCIUS

And, uncle, so will I, an if I live.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, go with me into mine armoury;
Lucius, I'll fit thee; and withal, my boy,
Shalt carry from me to the empress' sons
120 Presents that I intend to send them both:
Come, come; thou'l do thy message, wilt thou not?

YOUNG LUCIUS

Ay, with my dagger in their bosoms, grandsire.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, boy, not so; I'll teach thee another course.
Lavinia, come. Marcus, look to my house:
125 Lucius and I'll go brave it at the court:
Ay, marry, will we, sir; and we'll be waited on.

Exeunt TITUS, LAVINIA, and Young LUCIUS

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

O heavens, can you hear a good man groan,
And not relent, or not compassion him?
Marcus, attend him in his ecstasy,
130 That hath more scars of sorrow in his heart
Than foemen's marks upon his batter'd shield;
But yet so just that he will not revenge.
Revenge, ye heavens, for old Andronicus!

Exit

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Magni Dominator poli, Tam lensus audis scelera? tam lensus vides? 6

6 Titus's Latin words, here, are "Master of the great heavens, can you so calmly hear crimes? And so calmly see them?"

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, calm yourself, gentle lord--although I know there's enough written here on the ground to enrage even the mildest person, and make children exclaim with anger. My lord, kneel down with me; Lavinia, kneel; and knee, sweet boy, who we hope will grow up to be the Roman Hector 7. Swear with me--as Lucrece's father, Lord Junius Brutus 8, swore after her rape--that we will take mortal revenge on these traitorous Goths. We'll see them bleed, or we'll die instead.

7 "Hector" was a legendary Trojan warrior in Homer's *Iliad* who was brutally killed, and he was the son of Hecuba and Priam.

8 "Junius Brutus," Lucrece's father, paraded her body through the streets in outrage after her rape at the hands of Tarquin, inciting a rebellion against the king.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Certainly we will, if we can. But if you hunt these bear cubs, then beware; their mother will wake, and if she sees you once, she'll set the lion on you--for she lulls him to sleep while she plays on her back, and while he sleeps she'll do what she wants. You're not much of a huntsman, Marcus; leave it alone. And come, I'll go get a sheet of brass 9, and with a steel pen I'll write these words and lay it aside: the angry northern wind will blow these sands through the air like Sibyl's leaves 10.

9 Elizabethan proverbial wisdom held that injuries are written in "brass," making them last much longer than writing in the "sand" that blows away.

10 The "Sibyl" was a priestess who made prophecies by writing on oak leaves.

[To YOUNG LUCIUS] And what do you have to say for yourself, boy?

YOUNG LUCIUS

I say, my lord, that if I were a man, these slaves wouldn't be safe in their mother's bedroom.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Yes, that's my boy! Your father has often done the same for his ungrateful country.

YOUNG LUCIUS

And so will I, uncle, if I live long enough.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, go with me to my armory; Lucius, I'll fit you with armor, and you'll go to the empress's sons dressed like that, carrying presents from me. Come, come--you'll take the message for me, won't you?

YOUNG LUCIUS

Yes, by stabbing them in their hearts, grandfather.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, boy, not that; I'll teach you another way. Lavinia, come. Marcus, take care of my house while I'm gone; Lucius and I will go make a spectacle of ourselves at court. Yes, indeed we will, sir; and they'll pay attention.

TITUS, LAVINIA, and Young LUCIUS exit.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, heavens, can you hear a good man groan, and not stop these sufferings, or take pity on him? Marcus, care for him in his madness, since he now has more scars of sorrow on his heart than marks of the enemy on his battered shield. And yet he's so attached to justice that he won't take revenge. So take revenge for old Andronicus, heavens!

MARCUS exits.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter, from one side, AARON, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON; from the other side, Young LUCIUS, and an Attendant, with a bundle of weapons, and verses writ upon them

CHIRON

Demetrius, here's the son of Lucius;
He hath some message to deliver us.

AARON

Ay, some mad message from his mad grandfather.

YOUNG LUCIUS

My lords, with all the humbleness I may,
I greet your honours from Andronicus.
[Aside]
And pray the Roman gods confound you both!

DEMETRIUS

Gramercy, lovely Lucius: what's the news?

YOUNG LUCIUS

10 *[Aside]* That you are both decipher'd, that's the news,
For villains mark'd with rape--- May it please you,
My grandsire, well advised, hath sent by me
The goodliest weapons of his armoury
To gratify your honourable youth,
15 The hope of Rome; for so he bade me say;
And so I do, and with his gifts present
Your lordships, that, whenever you have need,
You may be armed and appointed well:
And so I leave you both:
20 *[Aside]*
like bloody villains.

Exeunt Young LUCIUS, and Attendant

DEMETRIUS

What's here? A scroll; and written round about?
Let's see;
25 *[Reads]*
'Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, / Non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu.'

CHIRON

O, 'tis a verse in Horace; I know it well:
I read it in the grammar long ago.

AARON

30 Ay, just; a verse in Horace; right, you have it.
[Aside]
Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!
Here's no sound jest! the old man hath found their
35 guilt;
And sends them weapons wrapped about with lines,
That wound, beyond their feeling, to the quick.
But were our witty empress well afoot,
She would applaud Andronicus' conceit:
40 But let her rest in her unrest awhile.
And now, young lords, was't not a happy star
Led us to Rome, strangers, and more than so,
Captives, to be advanced to this height?
It did me good, before the palace gate
45 To brave the tribune in his brother's hearing.

DEMETRIUS

But me more good, to see so great a lord

Shakescleare Translation

AARON, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON enter from one side; Young LUCIUS and a servant enter from the other side, carrying a bundle of weapons with scraps of paper tied around them.

CHIRON

Look, Demetrius, here's the son of Lucius--and he's got some message to give us.

AARON

Yes, some mad message from his mad grandfather.

YOUNG LUCIUS

My lords, I bring greetings from Andronicus with all the humility I can.

[To himself] And I pray the Roman gods punish you both!

DEMETRIUS

Thanks, lovely Lucius; what's the news?

YOUNG LUCIUS

[To himself] That we've found you out, that's the news, and know that you're rapists.

[To CHIRON and DEMETRIUS] With all respect, my grandfather has sent me to bring you the best weapons from his armory to amuse your honorable youth, for you are the hope of Rome. He told me to tell you that, and so I do. And I present you these gifts, your lordships, so that you can always be armed whenever you need to--and with that, I'll go.

[To himself] Armed like murderous villains, that is.

Young LUCIUS exits with servant.

DEMETRIUS

[Looks at weapon] What's this? A scroll tied around? Let's see.
[Reads] *"Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, / Non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu."*

 The inscription reads, "The man who is of pure life and free from crime needs not the bows and arrows of the Moor."

CHIRON

Oh, it's a verse by Horace , I know it well; I read it in school a long time ago.

 Horace was a famous Roman poet during the reign of Augustus.

AARON

Yes, right, a verse from Horace. You've got it.

[To himself] Ha, what an ass! This is no joke--the old man knows that they're guilty, and sends them weapons wrapped with words that wound them, although they don't pick up on it. But if our sly empress were here, she would applaud Andronicus's cleverness. But we'll leave her be for a while, since she's unwell.

[To CHIRON and DEMETRIUS] And now, young lords--wasn't it lucky that we came to Rome, since we arrived as foreigners and captives and now have so much power? It pleased me to have a go at Marcus Andronicus at the palace gate in front of his brother.

DEMETRIUS

And I love to see this great lord bow to us and send us gifts.

Basely insinuate and send us gifts.

AARON

Had he not reason, Lord Demetrius?
50 Did you not use his daughter very friendly?

DEMETRIUS

I would we had a thousand Roman dames
At such a bay, by turn to serve our lust.

CHIRON

A charitable wish and full of love.

AARON

Here lacks but your mother for to say amen.

CHIRON

55 And that would she for twenty thousand more.

DEMETRIUS

Come, let us go; and pray to all the gods
For our beloved mother in her pains.

AARON

[Aside] Pray to the devils; the gods have given us
over.

60

Trumpets sound within

DEMETRIUS

Why do the emperor's trumpets flourish thus?

CHIRON

Belike, for joy the emperor hath a son.

DEMETRIUS

Soft! who comes here?

Enter a Nurse, with a blackamoor Child in her arms

NURSE

65 Good morr ow, lords:
O, tell me, did you see Aaron the Moor?

AARON

Well, more or less, or ne'er a whit at all,
Here Aaron is; and what with Aaron now?

NURSE

O gentle Aaron, we are all undone!
70 Now help, or woe betide thee evermore!

AARON

Why, what a caterwauling dost thou keep!
What dost thou wrap and fumble in thine arms?

NURSE

O, that which I would hide from heaven's eye,
Our empress' shame, and stately Rome's disgrace!
75 She is deliver'd, lords; she is deliver'd.

AARON

To whom?

NURSE

I mean, she is brought a-bed.

AARON

Doesn't he have reason, Lord Demetrius? Didn't you treat
his daughter in a very friendly way?

DEMETRIUS

I wish we had a thousand Roman ladies like that, to take
turns serving our lust.

CHIRON

A kind and loving wish.

AARON

We just miss your mother to say "amen."

CHIRON

And she would wish we had twenty thousand more.

DEMETRIUS

Come, let's go and pray to all the gods for your beloved
mother in her labor pains.

AARON

[To himself] Pray to the devils; the gods have given up on
us.

Trumpets sound from within the palace.

DEMETRIUS

Why do the emperor's trumpets make that sound?

CHIRON

Probably because the emperor has a son.

DEMETRIUS

Look! Who's that?

A nurse enters with a blackamoor child in her arms.

³ "Blackamoor" is an Elizabethan term for a dark-skinned person--the baby is Aaron's child.

NURSE

Good morning, lords; oh, tell me, have you seen Aaron the
Moor?

AARON

Well, they've seen me more or less, or they never saw me at
all--here's Aaron. What do you want with him?

NURSE

Oh, gentle Aaron, we're all ruined! Help, or we'll be
miserable forever!

AARON

Why do you scream and cry like that? What's that bundle in
your arms?

NURSE

Oh, something that I would hide from the eye of heaven--
the shame of our empress and the disgrace of noble Rome!
She is delivered, lords; she's delivered.

⁴ Shakespeare plays on the dual meanings of "delivered" in Elizabethan English--both the modern sense of "handed over" (which is how Aaron understands her at first) and "give birth to a child."

AARON

To whom?

NURSE

I mean, she's had a child.

AARON

Well, God give her good rest! What hath he sent her?

NURSE

A devil.

AARON

80 Why, then she is the devil's dam; a joyful issue.

NURSE

A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue:
Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad
Amongst the fairest breeders of our clime:
The empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,
And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point.

85

AARON

'Zounds, ye whore! Is black so base a hue?
Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous blossom, sure.

DEMETRIUS

Villain, what hast thou done?

AARON

That which thou canst not undo.

CHIRON

90 Thou hast undone our mother.

AARON

Villain, I have done thy mother.

DEMETRIUS

And therein, hellish dog, thou hast undone.
Woe to her chance, and damn'd her loathed choice!
Accursed the offspring of so foul a fiend!

95

CHIRON

It shall not live.

AARON

It shall not die.

NURSE

Aaron, it must; the mother wills it so.

AARON

What, must it, nurse? then let no man but I
Do execution on my flesh and blood.

DEMETRIUS

100 I'll broach the tadpole on my rapier's point;
Nurse, give it me; my sword shall soon dispatch it.

AARON

Sooner this sword shall plough thy bowels up.

Takes the Child from the Nurse, and draws

Stay, murderous villains! will you kill your brother?
105 Now, by the burning tapers of the sky,
That shone so brightly when this boy was got,
He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point
That touches this my first-born son and heir!
I tell you, younglings, not Enceladus,
110 With all his threatening band of Typhon's brood,
Nor great Alcides, nor the god of war,
Shall seize this prey out of his father's hands.
What, what, ye sanguine, shallow-hearted boys!

AARON

Well, God give her a good rest afterwards! What sort of child has he given her?

NURSE

A devil.

AARON

Why, then she's the devil's mother; a happy birth.

NURSE

It's a joyless, sad, and black child: here's the baby, as disgusting as a toad among the fairest ladies of our land. The empress sends it to you--for it looks exactly like you--and orders you to kill it with your dagger.

AARON

By God, you whore! Is black so terrible a color?

[To the baby] Sweetheart, you are a beautiful flower, you are.

DEMETRIUS

Villain, what have you done?

AARON

That which you can't undo.

CHIRON

You have undone our mother.

AARON

Villain, I have done your mother.

DEMETRIUS

And in doing that, hellish dog, you've undone her. Oh, let her good luck come to an end, and damn her disgusting choice! Curses on the offspring of such a foul devil!

CHIRON

It shall not live.

AARON

It shall not die.

NURSE

Aaron, it must; the mother orders it.

AARON

What, it has to die, nurse? Then let no one but me kill my own flesh and blood.

DEMETRIUS

I'll stab the tadpole with the point of my blade; nurse, give it to me. My sword will soon get rid of it.

AARON

Before you do that, this sword will tear out your bowels.

Aaron takes the child from the nurse, and draws his sword.

Stop, murderous villains! Will you kill your brother? Now, by the light of the stars that shone so brightly when this boy was conceived, I'll kill whoever touches this child, my first-born son and heir! I tell you, boys, Enceladus and all of Typhon's offspring ⁵, or Alcides ⁶, or the god of war couldn't take this prey from his father's hands. What, what, you stupid, shallow boys! You white-washed walls! You painted alehouse signs! Coal-black is better than any other color, because it will never bear another hue: all the water in the ocean can never turn the swan's black legs to white,

⁵ Enceladus and Typhon are Greek mythological giants.

⁶ Alcides is an alternative name for Hercules, famous for his strength.

Ye white-limed walls! ye alehouse painted signs!
 115 Coal-black is better than another hue,
 In that it scorns to bear another hue;
 For all the water in the ocean
 Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,
 Although she lave them hourly in the flood.
 120 Tell the empress from me, I am of age
 To keep mine own, excuse it how she can.

DEMETRIUS

Wilt thou betray thy noble mistress thus?

AARON

My mistress is my mistress; this myself,
 The vigour and the picture of my youth:
 125 This before all the world do I prefer;
 This maugre all the world will I keep safe,
 Or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome.

DEMETRIUS

By this our mother is forever shamed.

CHIRON

Rome will despise her for this foul escape.

NURSE

130 The emperor, in his rage, will doom her death.

CHIRON

I blush to think upon this ignominy.

AARON

Why, there's the privilege your beauty bears:
 Fie, treacherous hue, that will betray with blushing
 The close enacts and counsels of the heart!
 135 Here's a young lad framed of another leer:
 Look, how the black slave smiles upon the father,
 As who should say 'Old lad, I am thine own.'
 He is your brother, lords, sensibly fed
 Of that self-blood that first gave life to you,
 140 And from that womb where you imprison'd were
 He is enfranchised and come to light:
 Nay, he is your brother by the surer side,
 Although my seal be stamped in his face.

NURSE

Aaron, what shall I say unto the empress?

DEMETRIUS

145 Advise thee, Aaron, what is to be done,
 And we will all subscribe to thy advice:
 Save thou the child, so we may all be safe.

AARON

Then sit we down, and let us all consult.
 My son and I will have the wind of you:
 150 Keep there: now talk at pleasure of your safety.

They sit

DEMETRIUS

How many women saw this child of his?

AARON

Why, so, brave lords! when we join in league,
 I am a lamb: but if you brave the Moor,
 155 The chafed boar, the mountain lioness,
 The ocean swells not so as Aaron storms.
 But say, again; how many saw the child?

NURSE

Cornelia the midwife and myself;
 And no one else but the deliver'd empress.

even if she bathed them hourly in the flood. Tell the empress from me that I'm old enough to keep my own child, whatever excuse she must make for it.

DEMETRIUS

Will you betray your noble mistress like this?

AARON

My mistress is my mistress; this child is me, the picture of how I was a child. I prefer this to all the world, and despite everything I will keep it safe--or all Rome will burn.

DEMETRIUS

Our mother will be forever shamed by this.

CHIRON

Rome will hate her if this foul thing lives.

NURSE

The emperor, in his anger, will condemn her to death.

CHIRON

I can't stand to think of this humiliation.

AARON

Why, that's because you're white: your treacherous color so easily betrays what you're thinking, since you blush so easily! But this young boy has another kind of complexion. Look how the black slave smiles on his father, as if to say "old boy, I'm yours." He's your brother, lords, fed from the same blood that first gave you life, and from the womb where you were imprisoned he has emerged, too, and come to the light. No, he is your brother, certainly, although he looks like me.

NURSE

Aaron, what should I tell the empress?

DEMETRIUS

Advise us what we should do, Aaron, and we'll take your advice. Save the child so that we can all be safe.

AARON

Then let's sit down and think. My son and I will have some space--stay over there. Stay there; now feel free to make a plan.

They sit.

DEMETRIUS

How many women saw his child?

AARON

Ah, see, brave lords! When we're working together, I'm like a lamb; but when you cross me, the boar, the mountain lioness, and the ocean are not so powerful as Aaron in rage. But tell us, again; how many have seen the child?

NURSE

Cornelia the midwife, me, and no one else but the empress.

AARON

160 The empress, the midwife, and yourself:
Two may keep counsel when the third's away:
Go to the empress, tell her this I said.

He kills the nurse

Weke, weke! so cries a pig prepared to the spit.

DEMETRIUS

165 What mean'st thou, Aaron? wherefore didst thou this?

AARON

O Lord, sir, 'tis a deed of policy:
Shall she live to betray this guilt of ours,
A long-tongued babbling gossip? no, lords, no:
And now be it known to you my full intent.
170 Not far, one Muli lives, my countryman;
His wife but yesternight was brought to bed;
His child is like to her, fair as you are:
Go pack with him, and give the mother gold,
And tell them both the circumstance of all;
175 And how by this their child shall be advanced,
And be received for the emperor's heir,
And substituted in the place of mine,
To calm this tempest whirling in the court;
And let the emperor dandle him for his own.
180 Hark ye, lords; ye see I have given her physic,

Pointing to the nurse

And you must needs bestow her funeral;
The fields are near, and you are gallant grooms:
This done, see that you take no longer days,
But send the midwife presently to me.
185 The midwife and the nurse well made away,
Then let the ladies tattle what they please.

CHIRON

Aaron, I see thou wilt not trust the air
With secrets.

DEMETRIUS

For this care of Tamora,
190 Herself and hers are highly bound to thee.

Exeunt DEMETRIUS and CHIRON bearing off the Nurse's body

AARON

Now to the Goths, as swift as swallow flies;
There to dispose this treasure in mine arms,
And secretly to greet the empress' friends.
195 Come on, you thick lipp'd slave, I'll bear you hence;
For it is you that puts us to our shifts:
I'll make you feed on berries and on roots,
And feed on curds and whey, and suck the goat,
And cabin in a cave, and bring you up
200 To be a warrior, and command a camp.

Exit

AARON

The empress, the midwife, and you: two can be silent when
the third's gone. Go to the empress and tell her that.

AARON kills the nurse.

Ha! She cries like a pig prepared to be roasted.

DEMETRIUS

What are you doing, Aaron? Why did you do this?

AARON

Oh, Lord, sir, for strategy. Should this babbling gossip live to
tell the tale? No, lords, no--and now let me tell you my full
plan. One of my countrymen, Muli, lives not too far from
here. Yesterday night his wife gave birth to a child like her,
as fair-skinned as you. Go to him, give the mother money,
and tell them the situation: if they give us their child, it shall
become the emperor's heir and take the place of mine, to
calm this storm in the court and let the emperor have his
son. Listen, lords, you see I have given her medicine--

Pointing to the nurse

And you have to take care of the funeral; bury her in the
fields nearby, for you're noble gentlemen. Once you're done
with that, hurry up and send the midwife to me. Once I've
taken care of the midwife and the nurse, then the ladies can
gossip all they want.

CHIRON

Aaron, I see you wouldn't trust the air with your secrets.

DEMETRIUS

For this favor to our mother, we're very grateful to you.

DEMETRIUS and CHIRON exit, carrying the nurse's body.

AARON

Now, swift as a sparrow, I'll go to the Goths, to leave this
treasure in my arms and secretly greet the empress's
friends.

*[To the baby] Come on, you thick-lipped slave, I'll take you
there, for it's you that's caused all this mess. I'll feed you
with berries and roots, and curds and whey. You'll nurse
from the goat, and live in a cave, and I'll bring you up to be
a great warrior and command a camp.*

AARON exits.

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter TITUS, bearing arrows with letters at the ends of them; with
him, MARCUS, Young LUCIUS, PUBLIUS, SEMPRONIUS, CAIUS, and
other Gentlemen, with bows

Shakescleare Translation

TITUS enters, carrying arrows with letters tied around the
ends; MARCUS, Young LUCIUS, PUBLIUS, SEMPRONIUS,
CAIUS, and other gentlemen enter with him, carrying bows.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, Marcus; come, kinsmen; this is the way.
 Sir boy, now let me see your archery;
 Look ye draw home enough, and 'tis there straight.
 Terras Astraea reliquit:
 5 Be you remember'd, Marcus, she's gone, she's fled.
 Sirs, take you to your tools. You, cousins, shall
 Go sound the ocean, and cast your nets;
 Happily you may catch her in the sea;
 Yet there's as little justice as at land:
 10 No; Publius and Sempronius, you must do it;
 'Tis you must dig with mattock and with spade,
 And pierce the inmost centre of the earth:
 Then, when you come to Pluto's region,
 I pray you, deliver him this petition;
 15 Tell him, it is for justice and for aid,
 And that it comes from old Andronicus,
 Shaken with sorrows in ungrateful Rome.
 Ah, Rome! Well, well; I made thee miserable
 What time I threw the people's suffrages
 20 On him that thus doth tyrannize o'er me.
 Go, get you gone; and pray be careful all,
 And leave you not a man-of-war unsearch'd:
 This wicked emperor may have shipp'd her hence;
 And, kinsmen, then we may go pipe for justice.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

25 O Publius, is not this a heavy case,
 To see thy noble uncle thus distract?

PUBLIUS

Therefore, my lord, it highly us concerns
 By day and night to attend him carefully,
 And feed his humour kindly as we may,
 30 Till time beget some careful remedy.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Kinsmen, his sorrows are past remedy.
 Join with the Goths; and with revengeful war
 Take wreak on Rome for this ingratitude,
 And vengeance on the traitor Saturnine.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

35 Publius, how now! how now, my masters!
 What, have you met with her?

PUBLIUS

No, my good lord; but Pluto sends you word,
 If you will have Revenge from hell, you shall:
 Marry, for Justice, she is so employ'd,
 40 He thinks, with Jove in heaven, or somewhere else,
 So that perforce you must needs stay a time.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

He doth me wrong to feed me with delays.
 I'll dive into the burning lake below,
 And pull her out of Acheron by the heels.
 45 Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we
 No big-boned men framed of the Cyclops' size;
 But metal, Marcus, steel to the very back,
 Yet wrung with wrongs more than our backs can bear:
 And, sith there's no justice in earth nor hell,
 50 We will solicit heaven and move the gods
 To send down Justice for to wreak our wrongs.
 Come, to this gear. You are a good archer, Marcus;

He gives them the arrows

'Ad Jovem,' that's for you; here, 'Ad Apollinem:'
 'Ad Martem,' that's for myself:
 55 Here, boy, to Pallas: here, to Mercury;
 To Saturn, Caius, not to Saturnine;
 You were as good to shoot against the wind.
 To it, boy! Marcus, loose when I bid.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come on, Marcus, come; kinsmen, this is the way.

[To Young LUCIUS] Sir boy, now let me see your archery;
 make sure you draw home and shoot straight. Terras
Astraea reliquit : remember it. Marcus, justice is gone,
 she ran away. Sirs, pick up your weapons. You, cousins, will
 go around the ocean and cast your nets; perhaps you can
 catch her in the sea. But there's just as little justice there as
 on land--so never mind. No, Publius and Sempronius, you
 must do it; dig with a fork and spade until you get to the
 center of the Earth. Then, when you get to Pluto's
 underworld, give him this petition. Tell him I ask for justice
 and for help, and that it comes from old Andronicus, who
 suffers in ungrateful Rome. Oh, Rome! Well, I made you
 miserable when I threw the people's votes on the tyrant
 Saturninus. Go, go away; and be careful everyone, and
 don't let a ship get by without searching it. This wicked
 emperor may have had her shipped her away. And then,
 kinsmen, we're searching for justice in vain.

This Latin phrase translates as,
 "Astraea has left the earth." Astraea is
 the goddess of justice.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, Publius, isn't this distressing, to see your noble uncle so
 mad?

PUBLIUS

And for that reason, my lord, we make sure to watch him all
 day and night, and take care of him as best we can, until
 perhaps time will heal him.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Kinsmen, his sorrows are past fixing. Join the Goths, and by
 going to war take revenge on Rome for this ingratitude, and
 on the traitor Saturnine.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Publius, how are you? How are you, my masters? What,
 have you found her?

PUBLIUS

No, my good lord; but Pluto says that you will have revenge
 from hell, if you ask for it. He thinks that Justice is busy with
 Jove in heaven, or somewhere else, so you need to wait a
 bit.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It's wrong to make me wait. I'll dive into the burning lake in
 the underworld, and pull her out of Acheron by the
 heels. Marcus, we're just shrubs, not cedars, not big-boned
 men like the cyclops . We're just metal and steel, Marcus,
 and yet we've had more wrongs done to us than our backs
 can bear. And, since there's no justice in earth or hell, we'll
 pray to heaven and move the gods to send down Justice to
 right our wrongs. Come, let's do it. You are a good archer,
 Marcus.

He gives them the arrows.

'To Jove,' that's for you; here, 'To Apollo'; 'To Mars,' that's
 for me. Here, boy, to Pallas; here, to Mercury; to Saturn;
 Caius. Not to Saturnine--you might as well shoot against the
 wind. Get to it, boy! Marcus, let your arrow fly when I tell
 you. I swear I've written to every god for justice.

2 Acheron is one of the rivers of
 hell, known as the "river of woe."

3 The "cyclops" is a gigantic,
 mythical creature with a single eye.

60 Of my word, I have written to effect;
There's not a god left unsolicited.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Kinsmen, shoot all your shafts into the court:
We will afflict the emperor in his pride.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Now, masters, draw.

They shoot

65 O, well said, Lucius!
Good boy, in Virgo's lap; give it Pallas.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, I aim a mile beyond the moon;
Your letter is with Jupiter by this.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Ha, ha!
70 Publius, Publius, what hast thou done?
See, see, thou hast shot off one of Taurus' horns.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

This was the sport, my lord: when Publius shot,
The Bull, being gall'd, gave Aries such a knock
That down fell both the Ram's horns in the court;
75 And who should find them but the empress' villain?
She laugh'd, and told the Moor he should not choose
But give them to his master for a present.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, there it goes: God give his lordship joy!

Enter a Clown, with a basket, and two pigeons in it

80 News, news from heaven! Marcus, the post is come.
Sirrah, what tidings? have you any letters?
Shall I have justice? what says Jupiter?

CLOWN

O, the gibbet-maker! he says that he hath taken
them down again, for the man must not be hanged till
the next week.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But what says Jupiter, I ask thee?

CLOWN

Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter; I never drank with him
in all my life.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, villain, art not thou the carrier?

CLOWN

90 Ay, of my pigeons, sir; nothing else.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, didst thou not come from heaven?

CLOWN

From heaven! alas, sir, I never came there God
forbid I should be so bold to press to heaven in my

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Kinsmen, shoot all your arrows at the palace; we'll annoy
the prideful emperor.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Now, masters, draw.

They shoot.

Oh, nicely done, Lucius! Good boy, in Virgo's lap 4; give it
to Pallas.

4 "Virgo's lap" refers to the
constellation Virgo—so Titus is telling
Lucius to shoot the arrow at the sky.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

My lord, I aim a mile beyond the moon; I've sent your letter
to Jupiter.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Ha, ha! Publius, Publius, what have you done? See, see,
you've shot off one of Taurus's horns 5.

5 "Taurus" is a constellation of a
bull—hence, the horns.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

This was the game, my lord; when Publius shot his arrow,
Taurus butted heads with Aries 6, and both the ram's
horns fell down into the court. And who should find them
but the empress's villain? She laughed, and told the Moor
he should give them to the emperor 7 as a present.

6 "Aries" is a constellation of a ram.
Marcus puns on male rams' tendency
to butt horns with one another.

7 Tamora's comment that Aaron
should give the horns to Saturnine is
another joke about cuckold's horns.
Marcus imagines that horns have
fallen from the constellation Taurus
(the bull) and that the emperor should
wear them, since Tamora has
committed adultery with Aaron.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, there they go: God give joy to his lordship!

Enter a CLOWN, carrying a basket with two pigeons in it.

News, news from heaven! Marcus, the post is come. Man,
what do you hear? Do you have any letters for me? Will we
have justice? What does Jupiter say?

CLOWN

Oh, the gibbet 8-maker! He says that he has taken the
gibbets down again, for the man won't be hanged until next
week.

8 A "gibbet" is the wooden post
used for hanging condemned
criminals.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But what does Jupiter say, I ask you?

CLOWN

Sorry, sir, I don't know Jupiter; I've never had a drink with
him in my life.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

But villain, aren't you the messenger?

CLOWN

Yes, I carry pigeons, sir--nothing else.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, didn't you come from heaven?

CLOWN

From heaven! Oh, sir, I've never been there. God forbid I
should barge into heaven when I'm still so young. Why, I'm

95 young days. Why, I am going with my pigeons to the tribunal plebs, to take up a matter of brawl betwixt my uncle and one of the emperor's men.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Why, sir, that is as fit as can be to serve for your oration; and let him deliver the pigeons to the emperor from you.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

100 Tell me, can you deliver an oration to the emperor with a grace?

CLOWN

Nay, truly, sir, I could never say grace in all my life.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Sirrah, come hither: make no more ado, 105 But give your pigeons to the emperor: By me thou shalt have justice at his hands. Hold, hold; meanwhile here's money for thy charges. Give me pen and ink. Sirrah, can you with a grace deliver a supplication?

CLOWN

110 Ay, sir.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Then here is a supplication for you. And when you come to him, at the first approach you must kneel, then kiss his foot, then deliver up your pigeons, and then look for your reward. I'll be at hand, sir; see 115 you do it bravely.

CLOWN

I warrant you, sir, let me alone.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Sirrah, hast thou a knife? come, let me see it. Here, Marcus, fold it in the oration; For thou hast made it like an humble suppliant. 120 And when thou hast given it to the emperor, Knock at my door, and tell me what he says.

CLOWN

God be with you, sir; I will.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, Marcus, let us go. Publius, follow me.

Exeunt

going with my pigeons to the tribune of the plebs, to deal with a fight between my uncle and one of the emperor's soldiers.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

To TITUS Why, sir, this is the perfect messenger for your speech. Let him take the pigeons to the emperor from you.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Tell me, can you deliver a speech to the emperor with a grace? 9 ?

9 Titus means "grace" in the sense of aptitude and ability; the clown takes it to mean "say grace."

CLOWN

No, truly, sir, I've never said grace in my life.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Man, come here; don't say anything else, but just bring your pigeons to the emperor; you'll get justice from him, for my sake. Wait, wait; here's money for your trouble. Give me pen and ink. Man, can you deliver a petition gracefully?

CLOWN

Yes, sir.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Then here is a petition for you. And when you come to him, you must first kneel, then kiss his foot, then give him your pigeons, and then wait for your reward. I'll be close by, sir; make sure you do it well.

CLOWN

Leave it to me, sir.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Do you have a knife? Come, give it to me. Here, Marcus, fold it in the letter, for you've made it look like a humble petition. And when he's given it to the emperor, knock at my door, and tell me what he says.

CLOWN

God be with you, sir; I will.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, Marcus, let's go. Publius, follow me.

All exit.

Act 4, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter SATURNINUS, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, CHIRON, Lords, and others; SATURNINUS with the arrows in his hand that TITUS shot

Shakescleare Translation

SATURNINUS, TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON enter with Lords and other servants. SATURNINUS is holding the arrows that TITUS shot.

SATURNINUS

Why, lords, what wrongs are these! was ever seen
An emperor in Rome thus overborne,
Troubled, confronted thus; and, for the extent
Of equal justice, used in such contempt?
5 My lords, you know, as know the mighty gods,
However these disturbers of our peace
Buzz in the people's ears, there nought hath pass'd,
But even with law, against the willful sons
Of old Andronicus. And what an if
10 His sorrows have so overwhelm'd his wits,
Shall we be thus afflicted in his wrecks,
His fits, his frenzy, and his bitterness?
And now he writes to heaven for his redress:
See, here's to Jove, and this to Mercury;
15 This to Apollo; this to the god of war;
Sweet scrolls to fly about the streets of Rome!
What's this but libelling against the senate,
And blazoning our injustice every where?
A goodly humour, is it not, my lords?
20 As who would say, in Rome no justice were.
But if I live, his feigned ecstasies
Shall be no shelter to these outrages:
But he and his shall know that justice lives
In Saturninus' health, whom, if she sleep,
25 He'll so awake as she in fury shall
Cut off the proud'st conspirator that lives.

TAMORA

My gracious lord, my lovely Saturnine,
Lord of my life, commander of my thoughts,
Calm thee, and bear the faults of Titus' age,
30 The effects of sorrow for his valiant sons,
Whose loss hath pierced him deep and scarr'd his heart;
And rather comfort his distressed plight
Than prosecute the meanest or the best
For these contempts.
35 [Aside] Why, thus it shall become
High-witted Tamora to glaze with all:
But, Titus, I have touched thee to the quick,
40 Thy life-blood out: if Aaron now be wise,
Then is all safe, the anchor's in the port.

*Enter Clown***TAMORA**

How now, good fellow! wouldst thou speak with us?

CLOWN

Yea, forsooth, an your mistership be emperial.

TAMORA

45 Empress I am, but yonder sits the emperor.

CLOWN

'Tis he. God and Saint Stephen give you good den:
I have brought you a letter and a couple of pigeons
here.

*SATURNINUS reads the letter***SATURNINUS**

50 Go, take him away, and hang him presently.

CLOWN

How much money must I have?

TAMORA

Come, sirrah, you must be hanged.

CLOWN

Hanged! by'r lady, then I have brought up a neck to

SATURNINUS

Why, lords, this is an outrage! Has there ever been a Roman emperor oppressed, disobeyed, and troubled like this--and treated with such contempt, simply for enforcing the law? My lords, you and the mighty gods know that whatever these disturbers of the peace say, buzzing like bees in the common people's ears, that what happened to old Andronicus's sons was just and legal. And so what if he's gone crazy? Do we have to deal with the consequences of his fits and bitterness? And now he writes to heaven for justice. See *[shows arrows]*, here's to Jove, and this one's to Mercury; to Apollo, to the god of war . . . and these papers are scattered throughout the streets of Rome! Isn't this libel
against the Senate, accusing us of injustice everywhere? Good ammunition, my lords, for those would say there's no justice in Rome. But if I live, his pretended madness won't protect him--he and his family will know that justice lives as long as Saturninus is here, and if she *[she]* sleeps, he'll wake her and set her on them in fury.

 *Libel* is a written, false statement that damages a person's reputation.

 Saturninus continues the habit of referring to "justice" as a woman--"she," here, is the goddess of Justice (*Astrea*).

TAMORA

My gracious lord, my lovely Saturnine, lord of my life,
commander of my thoughts: calm yourself. Remember that
Titus is old; his grief for his sons has pierced him deeply and
scarred his heart. Comfort him in his distress instead of
prosecuting the greatest or least member of his family for
this.

[To herself] Well, it's clever to pretend to defend him like
this. But Titus, I've got you, and I've spilled your life-blood.
If Aaron's plan goes smoothly, then we're almost there.

*CLOWN enters.***TAMORA**

Hello, good man! Do you want to speak with us?

CLOWN

Yes, indeed, if you're an imperial lady.

TAMORA

I'm the empress, but the emperor is there.

CLOWN

It's him. God and Saint Stephen give you good evening; I've
brought you a letter and a couple of pigeons.

*SATURNINUS reads the letter.***SATURNINUS**

[To guards] Go, take him away, and hang him immediately.

CLOWN

How much money do I get?

TAMORA

Go on, man, you must be hanged.

CLOWN

Hanged! By our Lady, then I've come to a good end.

a fair end.

55

Exit, guarded

SATURNINUS

Despiteful and intolerable wrongs!
Shall I endure this monstrous villany?
I know from whence this same device proceeds:
May this be borne?-- as if his traitorous sons,
60 That died by law for murder of our brother,
Have by my means been butcher'd wrongfully!
Go, drag the villain hither by the hair;
Nor age nor honour shall shape privilege:
For this proud mock I'll be thy slaughterman;
65 Sly frantic wretch, that holp'st to make me great,
In hope thyself should govern Rome and me.

Enter AEMILIUS

SATURNINUS

What news with thee, AEmilius?

AEMILIUS

Arm, arm, my lord;--Rome never had more cause.
70 The Goths have gather'd head; and with a power
high-resolved men, bent to the spoil,
They hither march amain, under conduct
Of Lucius, son to old Andronicus;
Who threats, in course of this revenge, to do
75 As much as ever Coriolanus did.

SATURNINUS

Is warlike Lucius general of the Goths?
These tidings nip me, and I hang the head
As flowers with frost or grass beat down with storms:
Ay, now begin our sorrows to approach:
80 'Tis he the common people love so much;
Myself hath often over-heard them say,
When I have walked like a private man,
That Lucius' banishment was wrongfully,
And they have wish'd that Lucius were their emperor.

TAMORA

85 Why should you fear? is not your city strong?

SATURNINUS

Ay, but the citizens favor Lucius,
And will revolt from me to succor him.

TAMORA

King, be thy thoughts imperious, like thy name.
Is the sun dimm'd, that gnats do fly in it?
90 The eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby,
Knowing that with the shadow of his wings
He can at pleasure stint their melody:
Even so mayst thou the giddy men of Rome.
95 Then cheer thy spirit : for know, thou emperor,
I will enchant the old Andronicus
With words more sweet, and yet more dangerous,
Than baits to fish, or honey-stalks to sheep,
When as the one is wounded with the bait,
100 The other rotted with delicious feed.

SATURNINUS

But he will not entreat his son for us.

TAMORA

If Tamora entreat him, then he will:
For I can smooth and fill his aged ear
With golden promises; that, were his heart
105 Almost impregnable, his old ears deaf,
Yet should both ear and heart obey my tongue.

CLOWN exits, under guard.

SATURNINUS

Spiteful and intolerable treatment! How can I endure this monstrous behavior? I know where this came from--can I bear this? He acts as if his traitorous sons, that died lawfully for murdering my brother, have been unjustly killed by me! Go, drag the villain here by his hair; I won't go any easier on him because he's old and honored in battle. For this proud mockery I'll kill him, the crafty, crazy bastard, who helped to give me the throne hoping he could take control of Rome and me.

AEMILIUS enters.

SATURNINUS

What do you have to report, Aemilius?

AEMILIUS

Raise an army, my lord--Rome has never been under attack like this before. The Goths have arrived with an army of soldiers intent on sacking the city. They come here under the command of Lucius, old Andronicus's son, who threatens to take as much revenge as *Coriolanus* ³ ever did.

³ *Coriolanus* was a legendary general who was exiled from Rome. In revenge, he gathered an army of enemy soldiers and attacked the city.

SATURNINUS

Fierce warrior Lucius is general of the Goths? This news nips me like a flower covered in frost or grass beaten down with storms. Yes, now our sorrow comes; the common people love him. When I've disguised myself and walked through the streets, I've often heard them say that Lucius was wrongfully banished, and that they wish he were their emperor.

TAMORA

Why should you be afraid? Doesn't the city have strong defenses?

SATURNINUS

Yes, but the citizens prefer Lucius, and will rebel against me to support him.

TAMORA

King, your thoughts should be as imperial as your name. Is the sun dimmed when gnats fly in it? The eagle doesn't mind when little birds sing, since he knows he can shut them up whenever he wants--so can you with the silly citizens of Rome. Then cheer up, emperor. For I will enchant the old Andronicus with words sweeter and more dangerous than baits to fish or stalks of honeysuckle to sheep, when they're wounded with the bait or poisoned with delicious food.

SATURNINUS

But he won't beg his son to stop the attack.

TAMORA

If Tamora asks him, then he will. For I can smooth things over and fill his ear with golden promises. Even if his heart were hard as stone and his old ears deaf, both his heart and his ears would obey my words.

[To AEMILIUS]

Go thou before, be our ambassador:
 110 Say that the emperor requests a parley
 Of warlike Lucius, and appoint the meeting
 Even at his father's house, the old Andronicus.

SATURNINUS

AEmilius, do this message honourably:
 And if he stand on hostage for his safety,
 115 Bid him demand what pledge will please him best.

AEMILIUS

Your bidding shall I do effectually.

*Exit***TAMORA**

Now will I to that old Andronicus;
 And temper him with all the art I have,
 120 To pluck proud Lucius from the warlike Goths.
 And now, sweet emperor, be blithe again,
 And bury all thy fear in my devices.

SATURNINUS

Then go successantly, and plead to him.

Exeunt

[To AEMILIUS] You, go ahead of me and be our ambassador.
 Tell Lucius that the emperor requests a meeting with him at
 the house of his father, old Andronicus.

SATURNINUS

Aemilius, take care with this message. If he asks for some
 proof that we won't harm him, ask him what we can do to
 show we're in good faith.

AEMILIUS

I'll deliver the message as well as I can.

*AEMILIUS exits.***TAMORA**

Now I'll go to old Andronicus and deal with him with all the
 cunning I have, to get him to bring proud Lucius here from
 the warrior Goths. And now, sweet emperor, be cheerful
 again, and don't be afraid, since I'm taking care of it.

SATURNINUS

Then go now and talk to him.

All exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter LUCIUS with an army of Goths, with drum and colours

LUCIUS

Approved warriors, and my faithful friends,
 I have received letters from great Rome,
 Which signify what hate they bear their emperor
 And how desirous of our sight they are.
 5 Therefore, great lords, be, as your titles witness,
 Imperious and impatient of your wrongs,
 And wherein Rome hath done you any scath,
 Let him make treble satisfaction.

FIRST GOTH

Brave slip, sprung from the great Andronicus,
 10 Whose name was once our terror, now our comfort;
 Whose high exploits and honourable deeds
 Ingrateful Rome requites with foul contempt,
 Be bold in us: we'll follow where thou lead'st,
 Like stinging bees in hottest summer's day
 15 Led by their master to the flowered fields,
 And be avenged on cursed Tamora.

ALL THE GOTHS

And as he saith, so say we all with him.

LUCIUS

I humbly thank him, and I thank you all.
 But who comes here, led by a lusty Goth?

20

Enter a Goth, leading AARON with his Child in his arms

SECOND GOTH

Renowned Lucius, from our troops I stray'd
 To gaze upon a ruinous monastery;
 And, as I earnestly did fix mine eye
 Upon the wasted building, suddenly

Shakescleare Translation

LUCIUS enters with an army of Goths, with war drums and flags.

LUCIUS

Faithful friends and proven warriors, I've received letters
 from Rome telling me how much they hate the emperor and
 how eagerly they look forward to our arrival. So, great lords
 who are impatient with the wrongs done to you, however
 Rome has hurt you, make sure you repay it threefold.

FIRST GOTH

Brave son of great Andronicus--whose name once
 terrorized us and now comforts us, and whose honorable
 service to Rome has been badly repaid--you can count on
 us. We'll go where you lead us, like stinging bees led by the
 beekeeper to a field of flowers, and take revenge on cursed
 Tamora.

ALL THE GOTHS

Everything he says, we say with him.

LUCIUS

I thank him humbly, and I thank all of you, too. But who's
 that, led by a Goth warrior?

A Goth enters with AARON, holding his child in his arms.

SECOND GOTH

Famous Lucius, I went ahead of the army to see a ruined
 monastery, and as I looked at the building, I heard a baby
 cry underneath a wall. I followed the noise to its source,
 and heard someone shushing the baby by saying, "Be quiet,

25

I heard a child cry underneath a wall.
I made unto the noise; when soon I heard
The crying babe controll'd with this discourse:
'Peace, tawny slave, half me and half thy dam!
Did not thy hue bewray whose brat thou art,
30 Had nature lent thee but thy mother's look,
Villain, thou mightst have been an emperor:
But where the bull and cow are both milk-white,
They never do beget a coal-black calf.
Peace, villain, peace!'--even thus he rates
35 the babe,--
'For I must bear thee to a trusty Goth;
Who, when he knows thou art the empress' babe,
Will hold thee dearly for thy mother's sake.'
With this, my weapon drawn, I rush'd upon him,
40 Surprised him suddenly, and brought him hither,
To use as you think needful of the man.

LUCIUS

O worthy Goth, this is the incarnate devil
That robb'd Andronicus of his good hand;
This is the pearl that pleased your empress' eye,
45 And here's the base fruit of his burning lust.
Say, wall-eyed slave, whither wouldst thou convey
This growing image of thy fiend-like face?
Why dost not speak? what, deaf? not a word?
A halter, soldiers! hang him on this tree.
50 And by his side his fruit of bastardy.

AARON

Touch not the boy; he is of royal blood.

LUCIUS

Too like the sire for ever being good.
First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl;
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.
55 Get me a ladder.

A ladder brought, which AARON is made to ascend

AARON

Lucius, save the child,
And bear it from me to the empress.
If thou do this, I'll show thee wondrous things,
That highly may advantage thee to hear:
60 If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,
I'll speak no more but 'Vengeance rot you all!'

LUCIUS

Say on: an if it please me which thou speak'st
Thy child shall live, and I will see it nourish'd.

AARON

An if it please thee! why, assure thee, Lucius,
'Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak;
For I must talk of murders, rapes and massacres,
Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
Complots of mischief, treason, villainies
Ruthful to hear, yet piteously perform'd:
70 And this shall all be buried by my death,
Unless thou swear to me my child shall live.

LUCIUS

Tell on thy mind; I say thy child shall live.

AARON

Swear that he shall, and then I will begin.

LUCIUS

Who should I swear by? thou believest no god:
75 That granted, how canst thou believe an oath?

brown slave, half me and half your mother! The color of your skin betrayed who your father was; if nature had made you look like your mother, you might have been an emperor. But when the bull and cow are both milk-white, they don't breed a coal-black calf. Be quiet, villain, be quiet!"--so he said to the baby--"Since I have to take you to a trustworthy Goth, who, when he knows that you're the empress's child, will take good care of you for your mother's sake." When I heard this, I rushed at him with my weapon drawn, took him prisoner, and bought him here to do with as you see fit.

LUCIUS

Oh, many thanks, Goth, for this is the devil incarnate who robbed Andronicus of his good hand. This is the pearl that pleased the eye of your empress, and this child is the fruit of his burning lust. Tell us, slave, what should we do with this growing image of your devil-like face? Why don't you say anything? What, are you deaf? Not a word? Come on, soldiers! Hang him on this tree, and hang the fruit of his adulterous affair next to him.

AARON

Don't touch the boy; he is of royal blood.

LUCIUS

But he's too like the father to ever be good. First hang the child so he can see it die, which is a sight that will distress a father's soul. Get me a ladder.

Soldiers bring a ladder, which AARON is forced to climb.

AARON

Lucius, save the child, and bring it to the empress from me. If you do this, I'll show you marvelous things that will be to your advantage to hear. If you don't, whatever happens, I'll say nothing more but "revenge rot you all!"

LUCIUS

Say what you have to say: if I'm pleased with what you say, your child will live and I'll see it taken care of.

AARON

If it please you! Why, I assure you, Lucius, you'll be enraged when you hear what I have to say, for I'll reveal murders, rapes, and massacres; acts committed under cover of night; horrible deeds; treasonous plots; and villainous deeds which would make you have pity when you hear them, but were performed without pity. And all this will be buried with me when I die, unless you promise to me that my child will live.

LUCIUS

Tell what you know. I promise that your child will live.

AARON

Swear that he will, and then I'll talk.

LUCIUS

What can I swear? You don't believe in any gods; if that's true, then how can you believe an oath?

AARON

What if I do not? as, indeed, I do not;
Yet, for I know thou art religious
And hast a thing within thee called conscience,
With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies,
80 Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath; for that I know
An idiot holds his bauble for a god
And keeps the oath which by that god he swears,
To that I'll urge him: therefore thou shalt vow
85 By that same god, what god so'e'er it be,
That thou adorest and hast in reverence,
To save my boy, to nourish and bring him up;
Or else I will discover nought to thee.

LUCIUS

Even by my god I swear to thee I will.

AARON

90 First know thou, I begot him on the empress.

LUCIUS

O most insatiate and luxurious woman!

AARON

Tut, Lucius, this was but a deed of charity
To that which thou shalt hear of me anon.
'Twas her two sons that murder'd Bassianus;
95 They cut thy sister's tongue and ravish'd her
And cut her hands and trimm'd her as thou saw'st.

LUCIUS

O detestable villain! call'st thou that trimming?

AARON

Why, she was wash'd and cut and trimm'd, and 'twas
Trim sport for them that had the doing of it.

LUCIUS

100 O barbarous, beastly villains, like thyself!

AARON

Indeed, I was their tutor to instruct them:
That codding spirit had they from their mother,
As sure a card as ever won the set;
That bloody mind, I think, they learn'd of me,
105 As true a dog as ever fought at head.
Well, let my deeds be witness of my worth.
I train'd thy brethren to that guileful hole
Where the dead corpse of Bassianus lay:
I wrote the letter that thy father found
110 And hid the gold within the letter mention'd,
Confederate with the queen and her two sons:
And what not done, that thou hast cause to rue,
Wherein I had no stroke of mischief in it?
I play'd the cheater for thy father's hand,
115 And, when I had it, drew myself apart
And almost broke my heart with extreme laughter:
I pry'd me through the crevice of a wall
When, for his hand, he had his two sons' heads;
Beheld his tears, and laugh'd so heartily,
120 That both mine eyes were rainy like to his:
And when I told the empress of this sport,
She swooned almost at my pleasing tale,
And for my tidings gave me twenty kisses.

FIRST GOTH

What, canst thou say all this, and never blush?

AARON

So what if I don't? Indeed, I don't--but I know you're religious and have a thing called "conscience," and I've seen you perform twenty popish ¹ rituals and ceremonies, which you're always careful to observe. So that's why I make you swear, since I know that an idiot treats a toy like a god and keeps the promise he swears by that god. So you will swear by that god--whatever god it is that you worship--to save my boy, take care of him, and raise him, or else I won't tell you anything.

¹ "Popish" was an Elizabethan term for Catholic practices--an anachronistic reference for Ancient Rome.

LUCIUS

By my god, I swear to you that I will.

AARON

The first thing you should know is that his mother is the empress.

LUCIUS

Oh, insatiable and lustful woman!

AARON

Oh, Lucius, that was a charitable deed compared to what you'll hear from me soon. It was her sons that murdered Bassianus, and they were the ones who raped your sister, cut out her tongue, and cut her hands and trimmed ² her as you saw.

² "Trimmed," here and in the next lines, makes for a disturbing pun. The word is slang for sexual intercourse, and also refers to the process of trimming fat from meat. In this case, Lavinia's very limbs have been "trimmed" from her body.

LUCIUS

Oh, horrible villain! You call that trimming?

AARON

Why, yes, she was washed and cut and trimmed, and it was good fun for those who did it.

LUCIUS

Oh, barbaric animals, just like you!

AARON

Indeed, I was the one who told them to do it--they got their cunning from their mother, like a trump card that always wins the match. But their violence, I think, they learned from me, like a dog that goes for the bull's head. Well, my deeds will show what I'm made of. Plotting with the queen and her two sons, I lured your brothers to the hole where Bassianus's dead body lay; I wrote the letter that your father found and hid the gold mentioned in the letter, in league with the queen and her sons. What has happened that made you suffer that I wasn't involved with in some way? I cheated your father out of his hand, and when I had it, I broke down with laughter as soon as I was out of your sight. When he got his two sons' heads in exchange for his hand, I saw his tears from a hiding spot in the wall and laughed so hard that I cried too. When I told the empress this funny story, she almost fainted with pleasure, and as a reward gave me twenty kisses.

FIRST GOTH

What, can you say all this and not blush with shame?

AARON

125 Ay, like a black dog, as the saying is.

LUCIUS

Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?

AARON

Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
Even now I curse the day--and yet, I think,
Few come within the compass of my curse,--
130 Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
As kill a man, or else devise his death,
Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it,
Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
Set deadly enmity between two friends,
135 Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and hay-stacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I digg'd up dead men from their graves,
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,
140 Even when their sorrows almost were forgot;
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
'Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead.'
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
145 As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

LUCIUS

Bring down the devil; for he must not die
So sweet a death as hanging presently.

AARON

150 If there be devils, would I were a devil,
To live and burn in everlasting fire,
So I might have your company in hell,
But to torment you with my bitter tongue!

LUCIUS

Sirs, stop his mouth, and let him speak no more.

155

Enter a Goth

THIRD GOTH

My lord, there is a messenger from Rome
Desires to be admitted to your presence.

LUCIUS

Let him come near.

Enter AEMILIUS

LUCIUS

160 Welcome, AEEmilius what's the news from Rome?

AEMILIUS

Lord Lucius, and you princes of the Goths,
The Roman emperor greets you all by me;
And, for he understands you are in arms,
165 He craves a parley at your father's house,
Willing you to demand your hostages,
And they shall be immediately deliver'd.

FIRST GOTH

What says our general?

LUCIUS

AEEmilius, let the emperor give his pledges
Unto my father and my uncle Marcus,

AARON

Yes, like a black dog 3, as the saying goes.

3 To "blush like a black dog" was an Elizabethan proverb referring to those who are without shame. Aaron also puns on his own dark skin.

LUCIUS

Aren't you sorry for these horrible crimes?

AARON

Yes, I'm sorry that I didn't do a thousand more. Even now I curse the day--although there haven't been many such days, I admit--when I didn't do some horrible thing like kill a man (or else plot his death), rape a girl (or plot some way to do it), accuse some innocent person, swear, make two friends hate each other, break the neck of poor cattle, or set barns and hay-stacks on fire and tell the owners to put out the flames with their tears. I've often dug up dead men from their graves and set them standing up at the doors of their dear friends--who had begun to get over their grief--and used my knife to write on their skins, as on the bark of trees, "Don't let your sorrow die, although I'm dead." Ha, I've done a thousand awful things as easily as one would kill a fly, and nothing makes me sadder than not being able to do ten thousand more.

LUCIUS

Cut the devil down; he doesn't deserve such an easy death as hanging.

AARON

If there are devils, I wish I were one, and could live and burn forever in fire--so that I could see you in hell, and continue to torment you with my bitter words!

LUCIUS

Sirs, shut him up, and don't let him say anything else.

A GOTH enters.

THIRD GOTH

My lords, a messenger from Rome is here asking to see you.

LUCIUS

Let him come in.

AEMILIUS enters.

LUCIUS

Welcome, Aemilius. What's happening in Rome?

AEMILIUS

Lord Lucius and princes of the Goths, the Roman emperor sends his greetings. He understands that you are here with an army, and asks to meet with you at your father's house--if you ask for hostages to ensure your safety, they'll be immediately sent to you.

FIRST GOTH

How does our general respond?

LUCIUS

Aemilius, if the emperor gives these promises to my father and my uncle Marcus, we'll come. Let's march away.

And we will come. March away.

Exeunt

All exit.

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON, disguised

TAMORA

Thus, in this strange and sad habiliment,
I will encounter with Andronicus,
And say I am Revenge, sent from below
To join with him and right his heinous wrongs.
5 Knock at his study, where, they say, he keeps,
To ruminate strange plots of dire revenge;
Tell him Revenge is come to join with him,
And work confusion on his enemies.

They knock

Enter TITUS, above

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Who doth molest my contemplation?
10 Is it your trick to make me ope the door,
That so my sad decrees may fly away,
And all my study be to no effect?
You are deceived: for what I mean to do
See here in bloody lines I have set down;
15 And what is written shall be executed.

TAMORA

Titus, I am come to talk with thee.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, not a word; how can I grace my talk,
Wanting a hand to give it action?
Thou hast the odds of me; therefore no more.

TAMORA

20 If thou didst know me, thou wouldest talk with me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I am not mad; I know thee well enough:
Witness this wretched stump, witness these crimson
lines;
Witness these trenches made by grief and care,
25 Witness the tiring day and heavy night;
Witness all sorrow, that I know thee well
For our proud empress, mighty Tamora:
Is not thy coming for my other hand?

TAMORA

Know, thou sad man, I am not Tamora;
She is thy enemy, and I thy friend:
I am Revenge: sent from the infernal kingdom,
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind,
By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.
Come down, and welcome me to this world's light;
35 Confer with me of murder and of death:
There's not a hollow cave or lurking-place,
No vast obscurity or misty vale,
Where bloody murder or detested rape
Can couch for fear, but I will find them out;
40 And in their ears tell them my dreadful name,
Revenge, which makes the foul offender quake.

Shakescleare Translation

TAMORA, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON enter, in disguise.

TAMORA

So, I'll go to Titus dressed in this strange costume, and tell him I am Revenge, sent from below to help him right his terrible wrongs. I'll knock at the door to his study--which is where he spends most of his time, they say, plotting ways to take revenge--and tell him Revenge has come to help him destroy his enemies.

They knock.

TITUS enters on the balcony.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Who's bothering me? Are you trying to make me open the door, so that I'll lose my resolve and all my work will come to nothing? You're wrong if you think that will happen--for I've written my plan on this paper in blood, and what is written will be done.

TAMORA

Titus, I've come to talk with you.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, I won't hear it. How can I talk, since I lack a hand to accompany my words with appropriate gestures? You've gotten the better of me, so don't say anything else.

 Hand gestures (the "hand" that gives talk "action" in the original text) were an important part of classical rhetoric.

TAMORA

If you knew who I was, you'd talk to me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I'm not crazy; I know who you are. By my poor stump, these lines of blood, these lines of grief on my face, my exhausted days and heavy nights, and all my suffering, I know that you're our proud empress, mighty Tamora. Have you come for my other hand?

TAMORA

You sad man, I'm not Tamora. She's your enemy, and I'm your friend. I am Revenge, sent from hell to ease your mind, vulture-like in the way it gnaws at you, by taking bloody vengeance on your enemies. Come down, and welcome me to this world; talk to me about murder and death. There isn't a hollow cave, secret hideaway, obscure place, or misty valley where they can hide that I won't find them. I'll whisper "Revenge" in their ears, and the criminals will quake with fear.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Art thou Revenge? and art thou sent to me,
To be a torment to mine enemies?

TAMORA

I am; therefore come down, and welcome me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

45 Do me some service, ere I come to thee.
Lo, by thy side where Rape and Murder stands;
Now give me some surance that thou art Revenge,
Stab them, or tear them on thy chariot-wheels;
And then I'll come and be thy waggoner,
50 And whirl along with thee about the globe.
Provide thee two proper palfreys, black as jet,
To hale thy vengeful waggon swift away,
And find out murderers in their guilty caves:
And when thy car is loaden with their heads,
55 I will dismount, and by the waggon-wheel
Trot, like a servile footman, all day long,
Even from Hyperion's rising in the east
Until his very downfall in the sea:
And day by day I'll do this heavy task,
60 So thou destroy Rape and Murder there.

TAMORA

These are my ministers, and come with me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Are these thy ministers? what are they call'd?

TAMORA

Rapine and Murder; therefore called so,
Cause they take vengeance of such kind of men.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

65 Good Lord, how like the empress' sons they are!
And you, the empress! but we worldly men
Have miserable, mad, mistaking eyes.
O sweet Revenge, now do I come to thee;
And, if one arm's embracement will content thee,
70 I will embrace thee in it by and by.

Exit above

TAMORA

This closing with him fits his lunacy
Whate'er I forge to feed his brain-sick fits,
Do you uphold and maintain in your speeches,
For now he firmly takes me for Revenge;
75 And, being credulous in this mad thought,
I'll make him send for Lucius his son;
And, whilst I at a banquet hold him sure,
I'll find some cunning practise out of hand,
To scatter and disperse the giddy Goths,
80 Or, at the least, make them his enemies.
See, here he comes, and I must ply my theme.

Enter TITUS below

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Long have I been forlorn, and all for thee:
Welcome, dread Fury, to my woful house:
Rapine and Murder, you are welcome too.
85 How like the empress and her sons you are!
Well are you fitt'd, had you but a Moor:
Could not all hell afford you such a devil?
For well I wot the empress never wags
But in her company there is a Moor;
90 And, would you represent our queen aright,
It were convenient you had such a devil:
But welcome, as you are. What shall we do?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Are you Revenge? And have you been sent to me to torture
my enemies?

TAMORA

I am; so come down and welcome me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Do something for me before I come to you. I see that Rape
and Murder stand by your side; to prove that you really are
Revenge, stab them or crush them under the wheels of your
chariot. Then I'll come and be your charioteer, and travel
with you around the globe. I'll give you two black horses to
pull your wagon of revenge as you find the murderers in
their guilty caves; and when the cart is loaded with their
heads, I'll dismount and trot alongside your wheel like a
slavish footman all day long, from when the sun rises in the
east until it falls into the sea. And I'll do this hard task every
day, if you destroy Rape and Murder there.

TAMORA

These are my agents, and come with me wherever I go.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Are these your agents? What are their names?

TAMORA

They're called Rape and Murder because they take revenge
on rapists and murderers.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Good Lord, they look a lot like the empress's sons! And you
look like the empress! But we mortal men have miserable,
mad eyes that are easy to deceive. Oh, sweet Revenge, now
I'll come to you; and, if you can be happy with a one-armed
embrace, I'll embrace you soon.

TITUS exits the balcony.

TAMORA

[To CHIRON and DEMETRIUS] Since he's crazy, I'll just keep
agreeing with him. Whatever I come up with, just support
my story in whatever you say--for now he thinks I'm
Revenge. And, since he'll be easy to deceive now, I'll make
him bring his son Lucius to his house. And during the
banquet, I'll find some cunning way to destroy the Goth
army, or at least to make them turn against him. Look, here
he comes; I have to keep this up.

TITUS enters below.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I've been waiting for you for a long time. Welcome to my
sad house, dreaded Fury ; Rape and Murder, you're
welcome here, too. You look so much like the empress and
her sons! You would look even more like them if you had a
Moor with you--couldn't you find such a devil in hell? For I
know that the empress doesn't go anywhere without a
Moor, and if you're trying to look like her, it would be
convenient to have a devil like that. But you're welcome
just as you are. What should we do?

 A "fury" is a female goddess of
vengeance in Greco-Roman
mythology.

TAMORA

What wouldst thou have us do, Andronicus?

DEMETRIUS

Show me a murderer, I'll deal with him.

CHIRON

95 Show me a villain that hath done a rape,
And I am sent to be revenged on him.

TAMORA

Show me a thousand that have done thee wrong,
And I will be revenged on them all.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Look round about the wicked streets of Rome;
100 And when thou find'st a man that's like thyself.
Good Murder, stab him; he's a murderer.
Go thou with him; and when it is thy hap
To find another that is like to thee,
Good Rapine, stab him; he's a ravisher.
105 Go thou with them; and in the emperor's court
There is a queen, attended by a Moor;
Well mayst thou know her by thy own proportion,
for up and down she doth resemble thee:
I pray thee, do on them some violent death;
110 They have been violent to me and mine.

TAMORA

Well hast thou lesson'd us; this shall we do.
But would it please thee, good Andronicus,
To send for Lucius, thy thrice-valiant son,
Who leads towards Rome a band of warlike Goths,
115 And bid him come and banquet at thy house;
When he is here, even at thy solemn feast,
I will bring in the empress and her sons,
The emperor himself and all thy foes;
And at thy mercy shalt they stoop and kneel,
120 And on them shalt thou ease thy angry heart.
What says Andronicus to this device?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Marcus, my brother! 'tis sad Titus calls.

Enter MARCUS

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Go, gentle Marcus, to thy nephew Lucius;
125 Thou shalt inquire him out among the Goths:
Bid him repair to me, and bring with him
Some of the chiefest princes of the Goths;
Bid him encamp his soldiers where they are:
Tell him the emperor and the empress too
130 Feast at my house, and he shall feast with them.
This do thou for my love; and so let him,
As he regards his aged father's life.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

This will I do, and soon return again.

Exit

TAMORA

135 Now will I hence about thy business,
And take my ministers along with me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Nay, nay, let Rape and Murder stay with me;
Or else I'll call my brother back again,
And cleave to no revenge but Lucius.

TAMORA

What do you want us to do, Andronicus?

DEMETRIUS

Show me a murderer, I'll deal with him.

CHIRON

Show me a villain that's raped someone, and I'm here to
take revenge on him.

TAMORA

If you show me a thousand people who have wronged you,
I'll take revenge on all of them.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Look around the wicked streets of Rome, and when you find
a man that looks like you, good Murder, stab him, for he's a
murderer. Go with him, good Rape, and when you find
someone who looks like you, stab him, for he's a rapist.

[To TAMORA] Go with them, and in the emperor's court
there's a queen served by a Moor--you'll recognize her,
since she looks exactly like you. I beg you, give them both a
violent death, for they've been violent to me and my family.

TAMORA

You've told us well; we'll do it. But wouldn't it be nice, good
Andronicus, to send a message to your brave son Lucius--
who is coming towards Rome with an army of Goths--and
invite him to come for a banquet at your house? And when
he's here at this feast, I'll bring the empress and her sons,
the emperor himself, and all your enemies. They'll kneel
before you and beg for mercy, and you can do what you
want with them. What do you think of this plan?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Marcus, my brother! Sad Titus is calling for you.

MARCUS enters.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Go to your nephew Lucius, gentle Marcus, and tell him to
come to my house, bringing some of the Goth princes with
him. Ask him to leave his army where they are; tell him the
emperor and the empress are also coming for a banquet at
my house, and he'll feast with them. Do this out of love for
me, and tell him to come out of love and respect for his old
father.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

I'll do it, and return soon.

MARCUS exits.

TAMORA

Now I'll go and take revenge for you, bringing my agents
with me.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

No, no, let Rape and Murder stay with me. Or else I'll call my
brother back again, and I'll count on Lucius to take revenge
for me.

TAMORA

140 *[Aside to her sons]* What say you, boys? will you bide with him,
Whiles I go tell my lord the emperor
How I have govern'd our determined jest?
Yield to his humour, smooth and speak him fair,
145 And tarry with him till I turn again.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

[Aside] I know them all, though they suppose me mad,
And will o'erreach them in their own devices:
A pair of cursed hell-hounds and their dam!

DEMETRIUS

Madam, depart at pleasure; leave us here.

TAMORA

150 Farewell, Andronicus: Revenge now goes
To lay a complot to betray thy foes.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I know thou dost; and, sweet Revenge, farewell.

Exit TAMORA

CHIRON

Tell us, old man, how shall we be employ'd?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

155 Tut, I have work enough for you to do.
Publius, come hither, Caius, and Valentine!

Enter PUBLIUS and others

PUBLIUS

What is your will?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Know you these two?

PUBLIUS

160 The empress' sons, I take them, Chiron and Demetrius.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Fie, Publius, fie! thou art too much deceived;
The one is Murder, Rape is the other's name;
And therefore bind them, gentle Publius;
Caius and Valentine, lay hands on them.
165 Oft have you heard me wish for such an hour,
And now I find it; therefore bind them sure,
And stop their mouths, if they begin to cry.

Exit

PUBLIUS, &c. lay hold on CHIRON and DEMETRIUS

CHIRON

Villains, forbear! we are the empress' sons.

PUBLIUS

170 And therefore do we what we are commanded.
Stop close their mouths, let them not speak a word.
Is he sure bound? look that you bind them fast.

Re-enter TITUS, with LAVINIA; he bearing a knife, and she a basin

TAMORA

[To her sons, so that only they can hear] What do you think, boys? Will you stay with him while I go tell my husband the emperor how I've handled this new joke? Play along, be nice, and stay with him until I return again.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

[To himself] I know who they are, although they think I'm crazy. I'll beat them at their own game, this pair of cursed hell-dogs and their mother!

DEMETRIUS

Madam, go whenever you want; leave us here.

TAMORA

Goodbye, Andronicus; Revenge is going now to lay a plot against your enemies.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I know you are. Sweet Revenge, goodbye.

TAMORA exits.

CHIRON

Tell us, old man, what should we do?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, I have enough work for you to do. Publius, Caius, and Valentine, come here!

PUBLIUS and other servants enter.

PUBLIUS

What do you want us to do?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Do you know these two?

PUBLIUS

They're the empress' sons, Chiron and Demetrius.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Oh, Publius, you're wrong. One is Murder, and the other's name is Rape. So put them in chains, gentle Publius; restrain them, Caius and Valentine. You've often heard me wish for this moment, and now it's here, so make sure they're bound tightly. Gag them if they start to cry out.

TITUS exits.

PUBLIUS and others attack CHIRON and DEMETRIUS.

CHIRON

Stop, villains! We are the empress' sons.

PUBLIUS

And so we'll do what we're told. Gag them, don't let them speak a word. Is he tightly bound? Make sure they can't escape.

TITUS re-enters with LAVINIA. He holds a knife and she carries a basin.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, come, Lavinia; look, thy foes are bound.
 Sirs, stop their mouths, let them not speak to me;
 But let them hear what fearful words I utter.
 175 O villains, Chiron and Demetrius!
 Here stands the spring whom you have stain'd with mud,
 This goodly summer with your winter mix'd.
 You kill'd her husband, and for that vile fault
 180 Two of her brothers were condemn'd to death,
 My hand cut off and made a merry jest;
 Both her sweet hands, her tongue, and that more dear
 Than hands or tongue, her spotless chastity,
 Inhuman traitors, you constrain'd and forced.
 185 What would you say, if I should let you speak?
 Villains, for shame you could not beg for grace.
 Hark, wretches! how I mean to martyr you.
 This one hand yet is left to cut your throats,
 Whilst that Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold
 190 The basin that receives your guilty blood.
 You know your mother means to feast with me,
 And calls herself Revenge, and thinks me mad:
 Hark, villains! I will grind your bones to dust
 And with your blood and it I'll make a paste,
 195 And of the paste a coffin I will rear
 And make two pasties of your shameful heads,
 And bid that strumpet, your unallow'd dam,
 Like to the earth swallow her own increase.
 This is the feast that I have bid her to,
 200 And this the banquet she shall surfeit on;
 For worse than Philomel you used my daughter,
 And worse than Progne I will be revenged:
 And now prepare your throats. Lavinia, come,

He cuts their throats

Receive the blood: and when that they are dead,
 205 Let me go grind their bones to powder small
 And with this hateful liquor temper it;
 And in that paste let their vile heads be baked.
 Come, come, be every one officious
 To make this banquet; which I wish may prove
 210 More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast.
 So, now bring them in, for I'll play the cook,
 And see them ready 'gainst their mother comes.

Exeunt, bearing the dead bodies

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Come, come, Lavinia; see, your enemies are in chains. Men, stop them from talking, I don't want to hear it. But I want them to hear every word I say. Oh villains, Chiron and Demetrius! Here is the fountain you've stained with mud, the lovely summer you've mixed with your winter. You killed her husband, and for that vile crime two of her brothers were condemned to death, and my hand was cut off and made into a joke. You cut off her sweet hands and her tongue. And worse than that, inhuman traitors, you took something from her more precious than hands or tongue--you raped her. What would you say, if I let you speak? Villains, you'd be ashamed to beg for mercy. Listen, miserable criminals! This is how I mean to kill you. I still have one hand left to cut your throats, while Lavinia holds between her stumps the basin that will receive your guilty blood. You know that your mother means to dine with me, and calls herself Revenge, and thinks that I'm crazy. Listen, villains! I'll grind your bones to dust, and with your blood and that dust I'll make a paste, and of that paste I'll make two pies out of your shameful heads. And then I'll tell that whore, your unholy mother, to eat you and swallow her own children. This is the feast I've prepared for her, and this is the food she'll eat. For you treated my daughter worse than Philomel, and I'll be revenged worse than Progne ³. And now prepare your throats. Lavinia, come,

³ "Progne" (or Procne) was Philomel's sister, and the wife of Philomel's rapist Tereus. Though Philomel's tongue was cut out, she embroidered a scene that alerted her sister to the crime. In revenge, Progne murdered her own son and served him to Tereus. Both sisters were changed into birds while escaping Tereus.

TITUS cuts their throats.

catch the blood. And when they're dead, I'll go grind their bones to a fine powder, and mix it with their hateful blood. And then their vile heads will be baked in that paste. Come, come, everyone do your part in preparing this banquet, which I hope will be more bloody and cruel than the Centaurs' feast ⁴. So, now bring them in, for I'll be the cook, and make sure they're ready for when their mother comes.

⁴ The "Centaurs' feast" refers to the bloody mythological battle between the Centaurs and the Lapith people, which began at a wedding banquet.

All exit, carrying the dead bodies.

Act 5, Scene 3**Shakespeare**

Enter LUCIUS, MARCUS, and Goths, with AARON prisoner

LUCIUS

Uncle Marcus, since it is my father's mind
 That I repair to Rome, I am content.

FIRST GOTH

And ours with thine, befall what fortune will.

LUCIUS

Good uncle, take you in this barbarous Moor,
 5 This ravenous tiger, this accursed devil;
 Let him receive no sustenance, fetter him
 Till he be brought unto the empress' face,
 For testimony of her foul proceedings:
 And see the ambush of our friends be strong;
 10 I fear the emperor means no good to us.

Shakescleare Translation

LUCIUS, MARCUS, and Goths enter, with AARON as a prisoner.

LUCIUS

Uncle Marcus, since my father wants me to come back to Rome, I'll do it.

FIRST GOTH

And we're with you, whatever happens.

LUCIUS

Good uncle, take this barbaric Moor as your prisoner--he's a hungry tiger, a cursed devil. Don't feed him, but keep him in chains until he's brought before the empress, to prove what she's done. And make sure our army is close by; I'm afraid the emperor plans to betray us.

AARON

Some devil whisper curses in mine ear,
And prompt me, that my tongue may utter forth
The venomous malice of my swelling heart!

LUCIUS

15 Away, inhuman dog! unhallow'd slave!
Sirs, help our uncle to convey him in.

Exeunt Goths, with AARON. Flourish within

LUCIUS

The trumpets show the emperor is at hand.

Enter SATURNINUS and TAMORA, with AEMILIUS, Tribunes, Senators, and others

SATURNINUS

What, hath the firmament more suns than one?

LUCIUS

20 What boots it thee to call thyself a sun?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Rome's emperor, and nephew, break the parle;
These quarrels must be quietly debated.
The feast is ready, which the careful Titus
Hath ordain'd to an honourable end,
25 For peace, for love, for league, and good to Rome:
Please you, therefore, draw nigh, and take your places.

SATURNINUS

Marcus, we will.

Hautboys sound. The Company sit down at table

Enter TITUS dressed like a Cook, LAVINIA veiled, Young LUCIUS, and others. TITUS places the dishes on the table

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Welcome, my gracious lord; welcome, dread queen;
30 Welcome, ye warlike Goths; welcome, Lucius;
And welcome, all: although the cheer be poor,
'Twill fill your stomachs; please you eat of it.

SATURNINUS

Why art thou thus attired, Andronicus?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Because I would be sure to have all well,
35 To entertain your highness and your empress.

TAMORA

We are beholding to you, good Andronicus.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

An if your highness knew my heart, you were.
My lord the emperor, resolve me this:
Was it well done of rash Virginius
40 To slay his daughter with his own right hand,
Because she was enforced, stain'd, and deflower'd?

SATURNINUS

It was, Andronicus.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Your reason, mighty lord?

AARON

May some devil whisper curses in my ear and give me the words, so that I can say all the venomous things that are in my heart!

LUCIUS

Get away, inhuman dog! Unholy slave! Soldiers, help our ¹ uncle take him away.

. ¹ In saying "our," here, Lucius has begun adopting the royal "we."

The Goths exit with AARON. A sound of trumpets is heard.

LUCIUS

The trumpets show that the emperor is here.

SATURNINUS and TAMORA enter with AEMILIUS, Tribunes, Senators, and servants.

SATURNINUS

What, is there more than one sun in the sky?

LUCIUS

What's the point of calling yourself a sun?

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Rome's emperor, and nephew, stop it; these differences must be discussed quietly. The feast is ready, which Titus has carefully prepared to make peace between you, and to bring love, fellowship, and honor to Rome. So please come and take your places at the table.

SATURNINUS

Marcus, we will.

Sound of trumpets is heard. Everyone sits down at the table.

TITUS enters dressed like a cook, along with LAVINIA (who is wearing a veil), Young LUCIUS, and other members of his household. TITUS places the dishes on the table.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Welcome, my gracious lord; welcome, mighty queen.
Welcome, warrior Goths; welcome Lucius; welcome to everyone. Although the food is modest, it will fill your stomachs, so please eat it.

SATURNINUS

Why are you dressed like that, Andronicus?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Because I wanted to make sure that everything was perfect for you and your wife.

TAMORA

We're grateful to you, Andronicus.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

If you knew what's in my heart, you would be. My lord, give me your opinion on this. Was it a good choice for quick-tempered ²Virginius to kill his daughter with his own hands, because she had been raped?

. ² According to the historian Livy, Lucius "Virginius" was a Roman centurion who killed his daughter after she was raped by a powerful politician.

SATURNINUS

It was, Andronicus.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why do you think so, mighty lord?

SATURNINUS

Because the girl should not survive her shame,
45 And by her presence still renew his sorrows.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

A reason mighty, strong, and effectual;
A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant,
For me, most wretched, to perform the like.
Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;

Kills LAVINIA

50 And, with thy shame, thy father's sorrow die!

SATURNINUS

What hast thou done, unnatural and unkind?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Kill'd her, for whom my tears have made me blind.
I am as woful as Virginius was,
And have a thousand times more cause than he
55 To do this outrage: and it now is done.

SATURNINUS

What, was she ravish'd? tell who did the deed.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Will't please you eat? will't please your
highness feed?

TAMORA

Why hast thou slain thine only daughter thus?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

60 Not I; 'twas Chiron and Demetrius:
They ravish'd her, and cut away her tongue;
And they, 'twas they, that did her all this wrong.

SATURNINUS

Go fetch them hither to us presently.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, there they are both, baked in that pie;
65 Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,
Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.
'Tis true, 'tis true; witness my knife's sharp point.

Kills TAMORA

SATURNINUS

Die, frantic wretch, for this accursed deed!

Kills TITUS

LUCIUS

70 Can the son's eye behold his father bleed?
There's need for meed, death for a deadly deed!

Kills SATURNINUS. A great tumult. LUCIUS, MARCUS, and others go up into the balcony

SATURNINUS

Because the girl shouldn't live any longer after having been dishonored, and by staying alive she reminds him of his grief.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

You make a strong case and give me a pattern to follow. I'll follow that miserable example. Die, die, Lavinia, and let your shame die with you--

TITUS kills LAVINIA.

and with that shame, may your father's grief die as well!

SATURNINUS

Who have you done? This is cruel and unnatural!

TITUS ANDRONICUS

I've killed the girl who made my eyes blind with tears. I am as miserable as Virginius, and have a thousand times more cause than him to do this horrible thing. And now it's done.

SATURNINUS

What, was she raped? Tell us who did it.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Will you eat? Will it please your highness to enjoy the food?

TAMORA

Why have you killed your only daughter like this?

TITUS ANDRONICUS

It wasn't me. It was Chiron and Demetrius; they raped her and cut out her tongue, and so they're responsible for all this.

SATURNINUS

Go bring them here now.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Why, they're both here, baked in that pie. Their mother has been daintily eating the flesh of her own children. It's true, it's true; I'll prove it with my sharp knife.

TITUS kills TAMORA.

SATURNINUS

Die, madman, for this murder!

SATURNINUS kills TITUS.

LUCIUS

Can a son watch his father bleed and do nothing? You'll die for this!

LUCIUS kills SATURNINUS. A great commotion. LUCIUS, MARCUS, and servants go up into the balcony.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

You sad-faced men, people and sons of Rome,
By uproar sever'd, like a flight of fowl
75 Scatter'd by winds and high tempestuous gusts,
O, let me teach you how to knit again
This scatter'd corn into one mutual sheaf,
These broken limbs again into one body;
Lest Rome herself be bane unto herself,
80 And she whom mighty kingdoms court'sy to,
Like a forlorn and desperate castaway,
Do shameful execution on herself.
But if my frosty signs and chaps of age,
Grave witnesses of true experience,
85 Cannot induce you to attend my words,
[To Lucius]
Speak, Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor,
When with his solemn tongue he did discourse
To love-sick Dido's sad attending ear
90 The story of that baleful burning night
When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy,
Tell us what Sinon hath bewitch'd our ears,
Or who hath brought the fatal engine in
That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound.
95 My heart is not compact of flint nor steel;
Nor can I utter all our bitter grief,
But floods of tears will drown my oratory,
And break my utterance, even in the time
When it should move you to attend me most,
100 Lending your kind commiseration.
Here is a captain, let him tell the tale;
Your hearts will throb and weep to hear him speak.

LUCIUS

Then, noble auditory, be it known to you,
That cursed Chiron and Demetrius
105 Were they that murdered our emperor's brother;
And they it were that ravished our sister:
For their fell faults our brothers were beheaded;
Our father's tears despised, and basely cozen'd
Of that true hand that fought Rome's quarrel out,
110 And sent her enemies unto the grave.
Lastly, myself unkindly banished,
The gates shut on me, and turn'd weeping out,
To beg relief among Rome's enemies:
Who drown'd their enmity in my true tears.
115 And oped their arms to embrace me as a friend.
I am the turned forth, be it known to you,
That have preserved her welfare in my blood;
And from her bosom took the enemy's point,
Sheathing the steel in my adventurous body.
120 Alas, you know I am no vaunter, I;
My scars can witness, dumb although they are,
That my report is just and full of truth.
But, soft! methinks I do digress too much,
Citing my worthless praise: O, pardon me;
125 For when no friends are by, men praise themselves.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Now is my turn to speak. Behold this child:

Pointing to the Child in the arms of an Attendant

Of this was Tamora delivered;
The issue of an irreligious Moor,
130 Chief architect and plotter of these woes:
The villain is alive in Titus' house,
And as he is, to witness this is true.
Now judge what cause had Titus to revenge
These wrongs, unspeakable, past patience,
135 Or more than any living man could bear.
Now you have heard the truth, what say you, Romans?
Have we done aught amiss,--show us wherein,
And, from the place where you behold us now,
The poor remainder of Andronici
140 Will, hand in hand, all headlong cast us down.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

You sad-looking men, people, and sons of Rome--torn apart by conflict, scattered like a flock of birds in the wind--we'll show you how to put this broken body back together again, how to put the scattered corn back into its sheaf. If we don't, Rome will be a curse to herself. The empire that once defeated many mighty kingdoms will, like a pitiful and desperate person shipwrecked on an island, collapse. But if white hair and wrinkles (the signs of experience) can't convince you to listen to me--

[To LUCIUS] then speak, Rome's good friend. Speak as eloquently as Aeneas when he told lovesick Dido about the fall of Troy--that destructive, burning night when the Greeks surprised King Priam's city. Tell us what *Sinon*³ has betrayed us, or who brought in the Trojan horse that has caused civil war in Rome. My heart isn't made of flint or steel, and I can't talk about all our suffering without crying--so I'll have to stop talking, even when you should listen most closely to what I have to say. Here's your captain: let him explain everything. Your hearts will throb and cry when you hear him.

³ "Sinon" was the Greek soldier who persuaded the Trojans to accept the wooden horse containing the enemy army that destroyed the city.

LUCIUS

Then, noble listeners, you should all know that it was Chiron and Demetrius who murdered our emperor's brother and raped our sister. For their foul crimes our brothers were beheaded, and my father's tears were mocked and his hand--the hand which has fought so many battles for Rome and sent her enemies to the grave--cut off as a joke. Lastly, I was unkindly banished from Rome. The gates shut on me and I turned away crying, and went to seek help from Rome's enemies. They drowned their hatred for Rome in my own honest tears and treated me as their friend. I'm the one who was turned away and yet I have saved Rome with my own blood, turning the knife's point away from her and allowing it to pierce my own body. Oh, you know that I'm no boaster; my scars (although they're silent) can prove that what I say is fair and honest. But wait! I think I'm talking too much in praise of myself. Forgive me, for people praise themselves when friends aren't around to do it for them.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Now it's my turn to speak. Look at this child:

MARCUS points to the child in the arms of a servant.

This is the son of Tamora and a corrupt Moor, who was responsible for plotting all these crimes. The villain is a prisoner in Titus's house; we've kept him to alive to prove it. Now you see how many reasons Titus had to take revenge--these crimes against him were unspeakable, past endurance, more than any living man could bear. Now that you've heard the truth, what do you say, Romans? Have we done anything we shouldn't have? If we have, tell us so, and the poor remains of the Andronici family will throw ourselves off the walls of our house, hand in hand, and crack our skulls on the stones below. Speak, Romans, speak: if that's what you want us to do, Lucius and I will fall hand in hand.

And on the ragged stones beat forth our brains,
And make a mutual closure of our house.
Speak, Romans, speak; and if you say we shall,
Lo, hand in hand, Lucius and I will fall.

AEMILIUS

145 Come, come, thou reverend man of Rome,
And bring our emperor gently in thy hand,
Lucius our emperor; for well I know
The common voice do cry it shall be so.

ALL

Lucius, all hail, Rome's royal emperor!

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

150 Go, go into old Titus' sorrowful house,
[To Attendants]
And hither hale that misbelieving Moor,
To be adjudged some direful slaughtering death,
155 As punishment for his most wicked life.

Exeunt Attendants

LUCIUS, MARCUS, and the others descend

ALL

Lucius, all hail, Rome's gracious governor!

LUCIUS

Thanks, gentle Romans: may I govern so,
To heal Rome's harms, and wipe away her woe!
But, gentle people, give me aim awhile,
160 For nature puts me to a heavy task:
Stand all aloof: but, uncle, draw you near,
To shed obsequious tears upon this trunk.
O, take this warm kiss on thy pale cold lips,

Kissing TITUS

These sorrowful drops upon thy blood-stain'd face,
165 The last true duties of thy noble son!

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Tear for tear, and loving kiss for kiss,
Thy brother Marcus tenders on thy lips:
O were the sum of these that I should pay
Countless and infinite, yet would I pay them!

LUCIUS

170 Come hither, boy; come, come, and learn of us
To melt in showers: thy grandsire loved thee well:
Many a time he danced thee on his knee,
Sung thee asleep, his loving breast thy pillow:
Many a matter hath he told to thee,
175 Meet and agreeing with thine infancy;
In that respect, then, like a loving child,
Shed yet some small drops from thy tender spring,
Because kind nature doth require it so:
Friends should associate friends in grief and woe:
180 Bid him farewell; commit him to the grave;
Do him that kindness, and take leave of him.

YOUNG LUCIUS

O grandsire, grandsire! even with all my heart
Would I were dead, so you did live again!
O Lord, I cannot speak to him for weeping;
185 My tears will choke me, if I ope my mouth.

Re-enter Attendants with AARON

AEMILIUS

Come, come, you respected elder of Rome, and take our emperor gently by the hand. I mean our emperor Lucius; for I know that the common people want him to take the throne.

ALL

All hail Lucius, Rome's royal emperor!

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Go, go into old Titus's sad house,

[To servants] And bring that atheist Moor here, so that we can condemn him to some horrible death as punishment for his evil life.

Servants exit.

LUCIUS, MARCUS, and servants come down from the balcony.

ALL

All hail, Lucius, Rome's gracious governor!

LUCIUS

Thanks, gentle Romans; I hope that I'll govern graciously, to heal Rome's wounds and suffering. But, gentle people, give me a moment to mourn my father. Everyone stand aside. But uncle, come closer, to cry with me on this body. Oh, take this warm kiss on your pale cold lips.

LUCIUS kisses TITUS.

These sad drops on your blood-stained face are the last marks of respect and love from your noble son!

MARCUS ANDRONICUS

Your brother Marcus, too, gives you tears and a kiss. If I could give you an infinite number of both, I would!

LUCIUS

Come here, son; come, come, and show us how to cry. Your grandfather loved you very much. He would often bounce you on his knee, or sing to you until you fell asleep on his chest; he told you many things that were fit for you to know when you were a child. Like a loving child, then, shed some tears, since kind nature requires it. Friends should be together in times of grief and sorrow. Say goodbye before we bury him. Do that kindness, and then leave him in peace.

YOUNG LUCIUS

Oh, grandfather, grandfather! I wish I were dead, so that you could live again! Oh, God, I can't talk through my tears; they'll choke me if I open my mouth.

Servants re-enter with AARON.

AEMILIUS

You sad Andronici, have done with woes:
Give sentence on this execrable wretch,
That hath been breeder of these dire events.

LUCIUS

Set him breast-deep in earth, and famish him;
190 There let him stand, and rave, and cry for food;
If any one relieves or pities him,
For the offence he dies. This is our doom:
Some stay to see him fasten'd in the earth.

AARON

O, why should wrath be mute, and fury dumb?
195 I am no baby, I, that with base prayers
I should repent the evils I have done:
Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did
Would I perform, if I might have my will;
If one good deed in all my life I did,
200 I do repent it from my very soul.

LUCIUS

Some loving friends convey the emperor hence,
And give him burial in his father's grave:
My father and Lavinia shall forthwith
Be closed in our household's monument.
205 As for that heinous tiger, Tamora,
No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weeds,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial;
But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey:
Her life was beast-like, and devoid of pity;
210 And, being so, shall have like want of pity.
See justice done on Aaron, that damn'd Moor,
By whom our heavy hap had their beginning:
Then, afterwards, to order well the state,
That like events may ne'er it ruinate.

Exeunt

AEMILIUS

You sad family, stop your mourning to pass judgment on
the evil man who is responsible for all this suffering.

LUCIUS

Bury him up the chest in the ground, and starve him. Let
him stand there, and scream, and cry for food; if anyone
gives him anything or takes pity on him, they'll die for it.
This is my judgment; someone make sure he's buried in the
ground.

AARON

Oh, why should I be silent when I'm so angry? I'm no baby
that will pray and ask forgiveness for the evil things I've
done. I'd do ten thousand worse things, if I could. If I ever
did one good thing in all my life, I regret it from my very
soul.

LUCIUS

Loving friends, some of you take the emperor away and
bury him in his father's grave. My father and Lavinia will
immediately be buried in our family tomb. But as for that
vicious tiger, Tamora, there will be no ceremony, no
mourners, no bell, no funeral. Throw her body out as prey
for beasts and vultures; her life was beast-like and she had
no pity, so she won't get any from us. Make sure justice is
done on Aaron, that damned Moor, who is responsible for
all of this. And after that, I'll reform the government, so that
such horrible events won't ever happen again and destroy
our country.

All exit.

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