

Antony and Cleopatra

by William Shakespeare

Act IV, sc. 12 (line 46 – intercut)

Mark Antony

Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done,

And we must sleep.

To MARDIAN

That thou depart'st hence safe,

Does pay thy labour richly; go.

Exit MARDIAN

Off, pluck off:

The seven-fold shield of Ajax cannot keep

The battery from my heart. O, cleave, my sides!

Heart, once be stronger than thy continent,

Crack thy frail case! Apace, Eros, apace.

No more a soldier: bruised pieces, go;

You have been nobly borne. From me awhile.

Exit EROS

I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and

Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now

All length is torture: since the torch is out,

Lie down, and stray no farther: now all labour

Mars what it does; yea, very force entangles

Itself with strength: seal then, and all is done.

Eros!--I come, my queen:--Eros!--Stay for me:

Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,

And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:

Dido and her AEneas shall want troops,

And all the haunt be ours. Come, Eros, Eros!

Re-enter EROS

EROS

What would my lord?

MARK ANTONY

Since Cleopatra died,

I have lived in such dishonour, that the gods

Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword

Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back

With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack

The courage of a woman; less noble mind

Than she which by her death our Caesar tells

'I am conqueror of myself.' Thou art sworn, Eros,

That, when the exigent should come, which now

Is come indeed, when I should see behind me

The inevitable prosecution of

Disgrace and horror, that, on my command,

Thou then wouldst kill me: do't; the time is come:

Thou strikest not me, 'tis Caesar thou defeat'st.

Put colour in thy cheek.

EROS

The gods withhold me!

Shall I do that which all the Parthian darts,

Though enemy, lost aim, and could not?

MARK ANTONY

Eros,

Wouldst thou be window'd in great Rome and see
Thy master thus with pleach'd arms, bending down
His corrigible neck, his face subdued
To penetrative shame, whilst the wheel'd seat
Of fortunate Caesar, drawn before him, branded
His baseness that ensued?

EROS

I would not see't.

MARK ANTONY

Come, then; for with a wound I must be cured.
Draw that thy honest sword, which thou hast worn
Most useful for thy country.

EROS

O, sir, pardon me!

MARK ANTONY

When I did make thee free, sworeest thou not then
To do this when I bade thee? Do it at once;
Or thy precedent services are all
But accidents unpurposed. Draw, and come.

EROS

*Turn from me, then, that noble countenance,
Wherein the worship of the whole world lies.*

MARK ANTONY

Lo thee!

Turning from him

EROS

My sword is drawn.

MARK ANTONY

Then let it do at once

The thing why thou hast drawn it.

EROS

My dear master,

My captain, and my emperor, let me say,

Before I strike this bloody stroke, farewell.

MARK ANTONY

'Tis said, man; and farewell.

EROS

Farewell, great chief. Shall I strike now?

MARK ANTONY

Now, Eros.

EROS

Why, there then: thus I do escape the sorrow

Of Antony's death.

Kills himself

MARK ANTONY

Thrice-nobler than myself!

Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what

I should, and thou couldst not. My queen and Eros

Have by their brave instruction got upon me

A nobleness in record: but I will be

A bridegroom in my death, and run into't

As to a lover's bed. Come, then; and, Eros,

Thy master dies thy scholar: to do thus

Falling on his sword

I learn'd of thee. How! not dead? not dead?

The guard, ho! O, dispatch me!