

William Shakespeare

The Life of Tymon of Athens

Dramatis Personae

TIMON of Athens

LUCIUS , flattering lord

LUCULLUS , flattering lord

SEMPRONIUS , flattering lord

VENTIDIUS , one of Timon's false friends

ALCIBIADES , an Athenian captain

APEMANTUS , a churlish philosopher

FLAVIUS , steward to Timon

FLAMINIUS , Timon's servant

LUCILIUS , Timon's servant

SERVILIUS , Timon's servant

CAPHIS , servant to Timon's creditors

PHILOTUS , servant to Timon's creditors

TITUS , servant to Timon's creditors

HORTENSIUS , servant to Timon's creditors

POET

PAINTER

JEWELLER

MERCHANT

MERCER

AN OLD ATHENIAN

THREE STRANGERS

A PAGE A FOOL

PHRYNIA , mistress to Alcibiades

TIMANDRA , mistress to Alcibiades

mistresses to Alcibiades

CUPID , in the Masque

AMAZONS , in the Masque

in the Masque

Lords, Senators, Officers, Soldiers, Servants,
Thieves, and Attendants

SCENE: Athens and the neighbouring woods

ACT I

SCENE I

Athens. A hall in Timon's house.

*Enter Poet, Painter, Jeweller, Merchant, and
others, at several doors*

Poet

Good day, sir.

Painter

I am glad you're well.

Poet

I have not seen you long: how goes the world?

Painter

It wears, sir, as it grows.

Poet

Ay, that's well known:
But what particular rarity? what strange,
Which manifold record not matches? See,
Magic of bounty! all these spirits thy power
Hath conjured to attend. I know the merchant.

Painter

I know them both; th' other's a jeweller.

Merchant

O, 'tis a worthy lord.

Jeweller

Nay, that's most fix'd.

Merchant

A most incomparable man, breathed, as it were,
To an untirable and continue goodness:
He passes.

Jeweller

I have a jewel here —

Merchant

O, pray, let's see't: for the Lord Timon, sir?

Jeweller

If he will touch the estimate: but, for that —

Poet

(Reciting to himself) 'When we for recompense
have
praised the vile,
It stains the glory in that happy verse
Which aptly sings the good.'

Merchant

'Tis a good form.

Looking at the jewel

Jeweller

And rich: here is a water, look ye.

Painter

You are rapt, sir, in some work, some dedication
To the great lord.

Poet

A thing slipp'd idly from me.
Our poesy is as a gum, which oozes
From whence 'tis nourish'd: the fire i' the flint
Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame
Provokes itself and like the current flies
Each bound it chafes. What have you there?

Painter

A picture, sir. When comes your book forth?

Poet

Upon the heels of my presentment, sir.
Let's see your piece.

Painter

'Tis a good piece.

Poet

So 'tis: this comes off well and excellent.

Painter

Indifferent.

Poet

Admirable: how this grace
Speaks his own standing! what a mental power
This eye shoots forth! how big imagination
Moves in this lip! to the dumbness of the gesture
One might interpret.

Painter

It is a pretty mocking of the life.
Here is a touch; is't good?

Poet

I will say of it,
It tutors nature: artificial strife
Lives in these touches, livelier than life.

Enter certain Senators, and pass over

Painter

How this lord is follow'd!

Poet

The senators of Athens: happy man!

Painter

Look, more!

Poet

You see this confluence, this great flood
of visitors.
I have, in this rough work, shaped out a man,
Whom this beneath world doth embrace and hug
With amplest entertainment: my free drift

Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of wax: no levell'd malice
Infects one comma in the course I hold;
But flies an eagle flight, bold and forth on,
Leaving no tract behind.

Painter

How shall I understand you?

Poet

I will unbolt to you.
You see how all conditions, how all minds,
As well of glib and slippery creatures as
Of grave and austere quality, tender down
Their services to Lord Timon: his large fortune
Upon his good and gracious nature hanging
Subdues and properties to his love and tendance
All sorts of hearts; yea, from the glass-faced
flatterer
To Apemantus, that few things loves better
Than to abhor himself: even he drops down
The knee before him, and returns in peace
Most rich in Timon's nod.

Painter

I saw them speak together.

Poet

Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill
Feign'd Fortune to be throned: the base o' the
mount
Is rank'd with all deserts, all kind of natures,
That labour on the bosom of this sphere
To propagate their states: amongst them all,
Whose eyes are on this sovereign lady fix'd,
One do I personate of Lord Timon's frame,
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her;
Whose present grace to present slaves and
servants
Translates his rivals.

Painter

'Tis conceived to scope.
This throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks,
With one man beckon'd from the rest below,
Bowing his head against the sleepy mount
To climb his happiness, would be well express'd
In our condition.

Poet

Nay, sir, but hear me on.
All those which were his fellows but of late,

Some better than his value, on the moment
Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear,
Make sacred even his stirrup, and through him
Drink the free air.

Painter

Ay, marry, what of these?

Poet

When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants
Which labour'd after him to the mountain's top
Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot.

Painter

'Tis common:
A thousand moral paintings I can show
That shall demonstrate these quick blows of
Fortune's
More pregnantly than words. Yet you do well
To show Lord Timon that mean eyes have seen
The foot above the head.

Trumpets sound. Enter TIMON, addressing himself courteously to every suitor; a Messenger from VENTIDIUS talking with him; LUCILIUS and other servants following

TIMON

Imprison'd is he, say you?

Messenger

Ay, my good lord: five talents is his debt,
His means most short, his creditors most strait:
Your honourable letter he desires
To those have shut him up; which failing,
Periods his comfort.
Noble Ventidius! Well;
I am not of that feather to shake off
My friend when he must need me. I do know him
A gentleman that well deserves a help:
Which he shall have: I'll pay the debt,
and free him.

Messenger

Your lordship ever binds him.

TIMON

Commend me to him: I will send his ransom;
And being enfranchised, bid him come to me.

'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,
But to support him after. Fare you well.

Messenger

All happiness to your honour!

Exit

Enter an old Athenian

Old Athenian

Lord Timon, hear me speak.

TIMON

Freely, good father.

Old Athenian

Thou hast a servant named Lucilius.

TIMON

I have so: what of him?

Old Athenian

Most noble Timon, call the man before thee.

TIMON

Attends he here, or no? Lucilius!

LUCILIUS

Here, at your lordship's service.

Old Athenian

This fellow here, Lord Timon, this thy creature,
By night frequents my house. I am a man
That from my first have been inclined to thrift;
And my estate deserves an heir more raised
Than one which holds a trencher.

TIMON

Well; what further?

Old Athenian

One only daughter have I, no kin else,
On whom I may confer what I have got:
The maid is fair, o' the youngest for a bride,
And I have bred her at my dearest cost
In qualities of the best. This man of thine

Attempts her love: I prithee, noble lord,
Join with me to forbid him her resort;
Myself have spoke in vain.

TIMON

The man is honest.

Old Athenian

Therefore he will be, Timon:
His honesty rewards him in itself;
It must not bear my daughter.

TIMON

Does she love him?

Old Athenian

She is young and apt:
Our own precedent passions do instruct us
What levity's in youth.

TIMON

(*To LUCILIUS*) Love you the maid?

LUCILIUS

Ay, my good lord, and she accepts of it.

Old Athenian

If in her marriage my consent be missing,
I call the gods to witness, I will choose
Mine heir from forth the beggars of the world,
And dispossess her all.

TIMON

How shall she be endow'd,
if she be mated with an equal husband?

Old Athenian

Three talents on the present; in future, all.

TIMON

This gentleman of mine hath served me long:
To build his fortune I will strain a little,
For 'tis a bond in men. Give him thy daughter:
What you bestow, in him I'll counterpoise,
And make him weigh with her.

Old Athenian

Most noble lord,
Pawn me to this your honour, she is his.

TIMON

My hand to thee; mine honour on my promise.
Humbly I thank your lordship: never may
The state or fortune fall into my keeping,
Which is not owed to you!

Exeunt LUCILIUS and Old Athenian

Poet

Vouchsafe my labour, and long live your lordship!

TIMON

I thank you; you shall hear from me anon:
Go not away. What have you there, my friend?

Painter

A piece of painting, which I do beseech
Your lordship to accept.

TIMON

Painting is welcome.

The painting is almost the natural man;
or since dishonour traffics with man's nature,
He is but outside: these pencill'd figures are
Even such as they give out. I like your work;
And you shall find I like it: wait attendance
Till you hear further from me.

Painter

The gods preserve ye!

TIMON

Well fare you, gentleman: give me your hand;
We must needs dine together. Sir, your jewel
Hath suffer'd under praise.

Jeweller

What, my lord! dispraise?

TIMON

A more satiety of commendations.
If I should pay you for't as 'tis extoll'd,

It would unclaw me quite.

Jeweller

My lord, 'tis rated
As those which sell would give: but you well
know,
Things of like value differing in the owners
Are prized by their masters: believe't, dear lord,
You mend the jewel by the wearing it.

TIMON

Well mock'd.

Merchant

No, my good lord; he speaks the common tongue,
Which all men speak with him.

TIMON

Look, who comes here: will you be chid?

Enter APEMANTUS

Jeweller

We'll bear, with your lordship.

Merchant

He'll spare none.

TIMON

Good morrow to thee, gentle Apemantus!

APEMANTUS

Till I be gentle, stay thou for thy good morrow;
When thou art Timon's dog, and these knaves
honest.

TIMON

Why dost thou call them knaves? thou know'st
them not.

APEMANTUS

Are they not Athenians?

TIMON

Yes.