



Titus Andronicus

Without a doubt, *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's bloodiest play. Titus, a Roman general, returns to Rome after a victorious campaign against the Goths. In tow as captives are Tamora and her sons—one of whom, Alarbus, is sacrificed at the hands of the sons of Titus. Saturnius, the newly declared emperor, is feuding with his younger brother, Bassianus; at one point Saturnius attempts to wrest Lavinia (who is Titus's daughter) from Bassianus, although he ends up failing in that and instead being seduced by the captive Queen Tamora. Tamora, all the while, plots with her Moorish lover, Aaron, against Titus.

Demetrius and Chiron, Tamora's other sons, begin the bloodletting in earnest. They encounter and kill the hapless Bassianus in the woods, then rape and mutilate Lavinia, leaving her without a tongue to speak or hands to write. Aaron furthers the revenge against Titus by framing his sons (Quintus and Martius) for the murder of Bassianus. Lucius, Titus's remaining son, attempts a failed rescue for which he is banished from Rome. They also discover Lavinia. At this low point, Aaron tells Titus that the emperor will spare Quintus and Martius if Titus cuts off a hand and sends it to him. This Titus does; however, the hand is soon returned along with the heads of his two sons. Titus is now on the brink of insanity. Lucius, meanwhile, raises an army of Goths to sack Rome.

As Lucius makes his preparations, Titus ensnares Demetrius and Chiron (who Lavinia has identified as her attackers), slays them, and sets to making a pie from their remains. When Tamora and Saturnius arrive to try to convince Titus to call off Lucius and his Goths, Titus offers them a dinner, featuring pie as the main course. In the midst of the feasting, Titus slays Lavinia to relieve her misery, reveals the secret ingredient of his pie, then turns his sword on Tamora, slaying her. Saturnius slays Titus; in turn, Lucius slays Saturnius. Lucius is elected emperor of Rome. He orders Aaron buried up to his chest and left to starve, and orders the body of Tamora be left unburied for the scavengers.

Dramatis Personae

Saturnius, Emperor of Rome
Bassianus, brother of Saturnius
Titus Andronicus, Roman general
Marcus Andronicus, a tribune
Lucius, son of Titus
Quintus, son of Titus
Martius, son of Titus
Mutius, son of Titus
Young Lucius, son of Lucius
Publius, son of Marcus
Sempronius, kinsman of Titus
Caius, kinsman of Titus
Valentine, kinsman of Titus
Aemilius, a noble Roman
Alarbus, son of Tamora
Demetrius, son of Tamora
Chiron, son of Tamora
Aaron, a moor; Tamora's lover
Tamora, Queen of the Goths
Lavinia, daughter of Titus
Captain, Tribune, Messenger, and Clown
Goths and Romans
A Nurse and Black Child
Senators, Tribunes, Officers, Soldiers, and Attendants