



Antony and Cleopatra

Mark Antony is supposed to be ruling the eastern Roman Empire. Cleopatra, however, has all of his attention as the two carry on a torrid affair in Egypt. The death of his wife, Fulvia, and the threat of a war by Pompey bring him back to Rome. There is tension between Octavius and Antony; Octavius feels that Antony has left Rome vulnerable while dallying with Cleopatra. As a gesture of goodwill, Antony agrees to marry Octavia, the sister of Octavius, but this only postpones what is to be a growing rift.

As events transpire, Octavius (now Caesar) and Antony begin to clash with their armies. Octavia tries to repair the damage and get Octavius and Antony back together. To everyone's chagrin, however, Antony seizes the opportunity during Octavia's absence to flee back to Egypt—and Cleopatra. Octavius is now doubly enraged, vowing to punish Antony for dishonoring his sister as well as Caesar. In the battle to come, Cleopatra sways Antony's mind into accepting a challenge from Caesar to a battle at sea; his aides try to tell him that his army has a better chance on land, but Antony will not listen. He will rue the decision.

At the height of the naval battle, Cleopatra orders her personal ship to leave the scene. Unfortunately, a lovestruck Antony orders his ship to follow her, and the battle at Actium becomes a Roman victory. Caesar rejects Antony's suit for peace, and instead attempts to split Antony and Cleopatra; Cleopatra, he decrees, will remain Queen of Egypt unmolested if she but kills Antony. Cleopatra refuses, and Caesar's army meets Antony's on land—resulting in a victory for Antony. The two armies withdraw to resume the fight the next day.

When another Egyptian retreat decides the day for Caesar, Antony accuses Cleopatra of treachery and threatens her life. To save herself, she flees to her tomb and has her servants bring word that she has killed herself. This pushes Antony over the edge, and he falls on his own sword, mortally wounding himself. He lives long enough, however, for the servants to bring him to Cleopatra, and the two once again profess their love before Antony breathes his last. Caesar, upon hearing the news of Antony's death, grieves for the loss of his rival and onetime friend. To Cleopatra he promises mercy, although he intends on humiliating her as a war captive. Cleopatra, recognizing his aims, secures an asp hidden in a fruit basket and uses its venomous bite to kill herself. Caesar decrees that Antony and Cleopatra be buried together as a posthumous act of kindness.

Dramatis Personae

Mark Antony, Triumvir
Octavius Caesar, Triumvir
M. Aemilius Lepidus, Triumvir
Sextus Pompeius - Pompey
Enobarbus, friend of Antony
Ventidius, friend of Antony
Eros, friend of Antony
Scarus, friend of Antony
Dercetas, friend of Antony
Demetrius, friend of Antony
Philo, friend of Antony
Maecenas, friend of Caesar
Agrippa, friend of Caesar
Dolabella, friend of Caesar
Proculeius, friend of Caesar
Thyreus, friend of Caesar
Gallus, friend of Caesar
Menas, friend of Pompey
Menecrates, friend of Pompey
Varrius, friend of Pompey
Taurus, a lieutenant-general
Canidius, a lieutenant-general
Silius, an officer
Euphronius, an ambassador
Alexas, attendant to Cleopatra
Mardian, attendant to Cleopatra
Seleucus, attendant to Cleopatra
Diomedes, attendant to Cleopatra
A Soothsayer
A Clown
Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt
Octavia, Antony's wife; sister of Caesar
Charmian, attendant to Cleopatra
Iras, attendant to Cleopatra
Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and Attendants