CLEO – with Antony, Act One

CLEOPATRA
Help me away, dear Charmian! I shall fall!
It cannot be thus long; the sides of nature
Will not sustain it.

ANTONY
Now, my dearest queen –

CLEOPATRA
Pray you, stand farther from me!

ANTONY
What’s the matter?

CLEOPATRA
I know by that same eye there’s some good news.
What, says the married woman you may go?
Would she had never given you leave to come!
Let her not say ‘tis I that keep you here.
I have no power upon you; hers you are.

ANTONY
The gods best know –

CLEOPATRA
Oh, never was there queen
So mightily betrayed! Yet at the first
I saw the treasons planted.

ANTONY
Cleopatra –

CLEOPATRA
Why should I think you can be mine and true –
Though you in swearing shake the throned gods –
Who have been false to Fulvia? Riotous madness,
To be entangled with those mouth-made vows
Which break themselves in swearing!

ANTONY
Most sweet queen –

CLEOPATRA
Nay, pray you seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell and go. When you sued staying,
Then was the time for words; no going then.
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven. They are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turned the greatest liar.

**ANTONY**
How now, lady?

**CLEOPATRA**
I would I had thy inches! Thou shouldst know
There were a heart in Egypt!

**ANTONY**
Hear me, queen.
The strong necessity of time commands
Our services awhile, but my full heart
Remains in use with you. Our Italy
Shines o'er with civil swords; Sextus Pompeius
Makes his approaches to the port of Rome;
My more particular,
And that which most with you should safe my going,
Is Fulvia's death.

**CLEOPATRA**
Though age from folly could not give me freedom,
It does from childishness. Can Fulvia die?

**ANTONY**
She's dead, my queen. (*HE gives HER the letters*).
Look here, and at thy sovereign leisure read
The garboils she awaked. At the last, best,
See when and where she died.

**CLEOPATRA**
O most false love!
Where be the sacred vials thou shouldst fill
With sorrowful water? Now I see, I see,
In Fulvia's death how mine received shall be.

**ANTONY**
Quarrel no more, but be prepared to know
The purposes I bear; which are, or cease,
As you shall give th'advice. By the fire
CLEO – with Antony, Act One

That quickens Nilus’ slime, I go from hence
Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
As thou affects.

CLEOPATRA
Cut my lace, Charmian, come!
But let it be; I am quickly ill and well –
So Antony loves.

ANTONY
My precious queen, forbear,
And give true evidence to his love, which stands
An honorable trial.

CLEOPATRA
So Fulvia told me.
I prithee, turn aside and weep for her,
Then bid adieu to me, and say the tears
Belong to Egypt. Good now, play one scene
Of excellent dissembling, and let it look
Like perfect honor.

ANTONY
You’ll heat my blood. No more.

CLEOPATRA
You can do better yet, but this is meetly.

ANTONY
Now by my sword –

CLEOPATRA
And target. Still he mends,
But this is not the best. Look, prithee, Charmian,
How this Herculean Roman does become
The carriage of his chafe.

ANTONY
I’ll leave you, lady.

CLEOPATRA
Courteous lord, one word:
Sir, you and I must part, but that’s not it;
Sir, you and I have loved, but there’s not it;
That you know well. Something it is I would –
Oh, my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten!

**ANTONY**

But that your royalty
Holds idleness your subject, I should take you
For idleness itself.

**CLEOPATRA**

'Tis sweating labor
To bear such idleness so near the heart
As Cleopatra this. But, sir, forgive me,
Since my becomings kill me when they do not
Eye well to you. Your honor calls you hence;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory, and smooth success
Be strewed before your feet!

**ANTONY**

Let us go. Come.

Our separation so abides and flies
That thou, residing here, goes yet with me,
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee.
Away!

*Exeunt.*