

Tito Andronico

A Sample Scene

The following sample scene reflects work-in-progress towards our edition and may well be revised before publication.

1.[1]

VESPASIANUS *enters, the Roman crown in his hand. Enter TITO ANDRONICO wearing a laurel wreath, the EMPEROR also enters, but at this time he is not yet the Roman Emperor. Also enter AETIOPISSA, the Queen of Ethiopia, who is lovely and white, with her two sons HELICATES and SAPHONUS, and MORIAN, who is black and has a mean cloak pulled over his magnificent clothes, being a servant to the Queen and her secret consort. The last four to enter are the prisoners of Tito Andronico. Also enter ANDRONICA [and Romans].*

VESPASIANUS Noble Romans, you are aware that our imperial throne is now empty and unfilled, and therefore we must soon elect another Emperor to avoid great discord and strife among the people. Because I know of no other man to whom this honour is more due than Tito Andronico, who is now the most distinguished and most eligible candidate, and since no-one in this city of Rome has given more than him in bloody and perilous combat, and also as everyone proclaims that the crown of Rome is his by right, so let us all wish him good fortune, place the Roman crown upon his head, and for all time hold and honour him as our most gracious Emperor.

EMPEROR What? Shall Tito Andronico wear the crown upon his head, and not I? No, that must never be! I am next in line and the crown is rightfully mine. Therefore, Romans, consider well and wisely what you do, so that no rebellion break out among us to trouble and endanger this noble city of Rome.

TITO Romans, you must know that this imperial throne is of no interest to me. I am now an old man and have spent all my life in constant and most perilous wars. Even if all the votes are cast for me, and everyone confers on me the imperial throne, you shall see that for the sake of peace I will give it to another, for it is through *concordiam* and unity between the Emperor and the council, and also the common people, that Rome has become the head of the entire world. If dissension and strife now arose within its walls, the city would perish. Therefore, I shall cast aside my pride and turn rather to humility. So come together now and let us crown the Emperor, loudly wishing him good fortune and well-being.

Tito Andronico places the crown upon the Emperor's head.

ALL [*cry*] We wish long life, good fortune, and well-being to the invincible and all-powerful Roman Emperor.

EMPEROR Well, my dear followers, since you elect and uphold me as your Emperor, I in turn commit myself to favour you with special liberties, to venture life and blood with you for our fatherland, and always to act in good faith. – As for you, Tito Andronico, who have gladly and willingly conferred this imperial throne on me for the common good and peace, I bear you great love and loyalty. Therefore, I desire your lovely daughter, Andronica, as my Empress, and today she shall be crowned as Empress and married to me, if it pleases you.

TITO Most mighty and invincible Emperor, it gives me special pleasure that you desire my dearest daughter, Andronica, as Empress, the more to establish peace and friendship between us. I hereby give you my daughter and wish you both a peaceful, long, and happy life.

Presents his daughter to him. The Emperor takes her by the hand.

EMPEROR I shall hold her in great respect and honour. But tell me, please, who are these that stand behind you?

TTTO Most mighty Emperor, this woman is the Queen of Ethiopia, these two are her sons, and the Moor is her servant, all of whom I have brought as prisoners from Ethiopia.

EMPEROR They please me greatly, especially the female creature, and I could wish that they were mine.

TTTO Most mighty Emperor, since they please your Majesty, I willingly give them to you.

He takes Aetiopissa and leads her to the Emperor.

Queen of Ethiopia, I hereby pronounce you free and unyoked from me, and present you to my gracious Lord Emperor.

AETIOPISSA Great and mighty Emperor of Rome, I, my sons, and my servant are now given over as your Majesty's captives, and we offer ourselves to your Majesty as your humble servants. Do with us as you please.

EMPEROR Lovely Queen of Ethiopia, I am well disposed towards you and yours. Therefore, do not be melancholy and distressed but of good cheer for I shall raise you to great things, and you shall be maintained according to your former status as a high-born queen.

AETIOPISSA All-gracious and most mighty Emperor, I humbly thank your Majesty for this great favour.

EMPEROR Well, time flies, so let us all now go inside.

Exeunt. Morian remains.

MORIAN Let me throw off these old rags now, for I see that my secret mistress holds favour and grace with the Emperor.

He pulls off the old cloak.

I hope she will attain even greater grace and *gratia* with him, and that she will win his love with her flattery and caresses and become the Empress of Rome. If that happens, I shall truly cuckold the Emperor and have far more pleasure and joy with her than he will. Everyone thought I was merely the Queen's servant – but no, I was her secret lover and slept more often with her than the King of Ethiopia, her husband, so that at last he noticed the mischief between me and the

Queen, and had me closely watched so that I could not go near her. The Queen became very impatient with her husband, for I could not come near her for fourteen days, being guarded so closely, and the King could not pluck her strings half as soundly as I. Therefore, she took poison and gave it to the King in a goblet of wine so that again I had free access to her. Yes, many who looked with displeasure on me and my paramour I have secretly killed in their bedchambers by night. I have committed thousands and thousands of villainies and robberies, and yet it seems to me that I have not done enough mischief yet. Yes, everyone, even the King himself, was very afraid of me because of my great, valorous deeds and military might. In battles and perilous wars I fought like a grim lion – not like a man but like a very devil. Thus, eventually, I became known throughout the whole world for my great, superhuman, manly exploits and was given the title of ‘Thunder and Lightning of Ethiopia’. My fame finally reached the Romans, who armed themselves mightily and came at us in Ethiopia, devastating and destroying the land with unheard-of cruelty. I went out against them with my army and thought they would cause me little trouble and be driven back so that none would return to Rome alive. But when the fight began, I saw how dreadfully old Tito Andronico hit back; he surpassed me and was ten times more fierce. In all my life I had not seen an army more warlike and battle-hardened these Romans. This frightened me, and I saw my ranks unravel, beaten like dogs. Before long, old Tito rushed at me and—something that no man had ever done before— struck me off my horse with his lance so fiercely that I didn’t know whether I were dead or alive. Then, they cut everyone down, so that no-one escaped. They took many spoils, among them me, the Queen, and her sons, and brought us to Rome. But now I shall go and see what comes about.

Exit.