

# **Timon of Athens**

**by William Shakespeare**

Presented by Paul W. Collins

© *Copyright 2011 by Paul W. Collins*

# **Timon of Athens**

By William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

**All rights reserved** under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this work may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, audio or video recording, or other, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Contact: [paul@wsrightnow.com](mailto:paul@wsrightnow.com)

*Note:* Spoken lines from Shakespeare's drama are in the public domain, as is the Globe edition (1864) of his plays, which provided the basic text of the speeches in this new version of *Timon of Athens*. But *Timon of Athens, by William Shakespeare: Presented by Paul W. Collins*, is a copyrighted work, and is made available *for your personal use only*, in reading and study.

*Student, beware:* This is a *presentation*, not a scholarly work, so you should be sure your teacher, instructor or professor considers it acceptable as a reference before quoting characters' comments or thoughts from it in your report or term paper.

## Chapter One Money Men

A feast is to be held this evening—and in Athens during the splendor of its golden age, that promises a night of munificence: a sumptuous supper with fine wines, elegant company, clever and charming conversation, and lively entertainment. Lord Timon is honoring his long-time friend Lord Alcibiades, the brilliant military commander whose skill and leadership in battle have brought victory to the Athenians in their fight against Lacedaemon and its Spartan warriors.

On the portico at the front of Timon’s mansion, the wealthy and politically powerful guests are already arriving; by twos and threes, the nobles—most of them legislators and worldly-wise men of commerce whose trading reaches to far-distant lands—amble toward the dining hall.

The terrace beside the massive house is busy; the host’s generous patronage is well known, prompting artists and artisans to bring their latest works and wares, merchants to show samples of their newest goods.

An eager young poet greets a middle-aged painter, who is kneeling to untie the string securing a cloth that protects his latest panel. “Good day, sir!”

“I am glad you’re well.”

“I have not seen you long! How goes the world?”

“It wears, sir, as it grows.”

“Aye, that’s well known, but what particular *rarity*?” asks the poet; gossip is a kind of currency. “What’s *strange*, which manifold record matches not?” He peers around at the array of Athenian excellence. “See the *magic!*—*O Bounty*, all these spirits *thy* power hath conjured to attend!”

He nods politely as two prosperous guests walking past them. “I know that merchant!” he tells the stolid painter.

The artist, tilting his work against the wall, glances over. “I know them both; th’ other’s a jeweler.”

- Not far from the poet, the merchant stops to talk to his companion. “Oh, ’tis a *worthy* lord!”

- “Aye, *that’s* most fixèd!” effuses the jeweler; they both know that Lord Timon’s worth, including holdings among the lands his troops seized during the war, is immense.

- “A most *incomparable* man!—inspired, as it were, to an untirable and continue *goodness!* He *surpasses!*”

- “I have a jewel here—”

- “Oh, pray, let’s see’t! For the Lord Timon, sir?”

- “If he will touch the estimate. But, as for *that*....” He laughs; the price is set too high, of course, but that could hardly be an impediment, given their host’s astonishingly profligate spending on any capricious notion.

The budding poet muses—somewhat guiltily: *When we, for recompense, have praised the vile, it stains the glory in that happy verse which aptly sings the good.*

- The merchant looks at the precisely cut gem. “’Tis a good form.”

- “And *rich!*” says the jeweler. “*Here* is a water,”—he means *a fine clarity*—“look ye!” he says, as they stroll away.

The painter has finished positioning his piece so as best to catch the light. He turns to the poet, who is watching the growing assembly of eager purveyors. “You are rapt, sir, in some work—something dedicated ‘To the great lord’...?”

The ambitious youth perks up. “A thing slipped idly from me,” he claims, showing the pack of papers he has brought. He looks toward the clouds. “Our poesy is as a gum which oozes from whence ’tis nourishèd”—like pine sap. “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!”

Satisfied with his several similes, the writer asks the painter, pointlessly, “What have you there?”

“A picture, sir. When comes your book forth?”

“Upon the heels of my presentment, sir,” is the confident reply; but without Lord Timon’s patronage, the work would perish unprinted. “Let’s see your piece.”

The painter unveils a vapid portrait, one of Timon in repose. “’Tis a good piece....”

“So ’tis! This comes off well and excellent!”

It’s the painter’s turn to affect modesty. “Indifferent.”

“*Admirable!* How *this* grace bespeaks *his own* standing!—what a mental power this *eye* shoots forth!—how big an imagination moves in this *lip!*” He intends no sarcasm, nor does the dull dauber hear any. “As to the silence of the gesture, one might... *interpret!*” says the poet, nonplussed, actually, by the flat figure, the face’s empty gaze.

“It is a pretty mocking of the life,” the artist allows. He points to an area of paint. “Here is a touch; is’t good?”

“I will say of it: *it tutors Nature!* Artificing strife *lives* in these touches—*livelier* than life!”

Actual life draws their eyes away, however, as several famous politicians pass by, on their way in to the evening meal.

“How this lord is followed! The senators of Athens!” breathes the poet, eyeing the growing number of rich celebrities drawn to Lord Timon’s home. “Happy man!”

The painter nods toward the doors, where several magnates are arriving. “Look, more.”

The poet watches, thoughtful. “You see this confluence, this great flood of visitors? I have, in this rough work,”—he touches the bundled sheets, his latest effort, “shaped out a man whom this beneath-world doth *embrace*, and hug with *amplest entertainment!*”—as it does Lord Timon. “My free drift halts not *particularly*, but moves itself upon a wide sea of wax!”—the tablets on which the draft was scratched. “No leveled *malice* infects one *comma* in the course I hold!—it flies an *eagle* flight, bold and forth on, leaving no trace behind!”

*No trace?* The painter looks at the sheaf of paper. “How shall I understand you?”

“I will unbolt to you.” The poet steps closer. “You see how all conditions, how *all minds*—of glib and slippery creatures, as well as those of grave and austere *quality*—tender down their services to Lord Timon, hanging upon his good and gracious nature! His large *fortune* subdues all sorts of art, and *properties* it to his love and attendance!

“Yea, from the glass-faced *flatterer*”—who tries to mirror the nobleman’s moods—“to *Apemantus*, who few things loves better than *abhorring himself*—even *he* drops down the knee before him, and returns in peace, most rich in Timon’s *nod!*” Apemantus, an austere thinker and cynic, takes sour pleasure in observing the nobleman’s displays of beneficence.

“I saw them speak together.”

The poet warms to the task of describing his literary conception. “Sir, I have upon a high and pleasant hill feignèd *Fortune* to be throned; the base o’ the mount is ranked 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 fixèd, one do I personate of Lord *Timon*’s frame—whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts *to* her—whose present grace to slaves and servants *transcends* his *rival’s!*”—her own.

Picturing the scene, the painter nods. “’Tis conceivèd to scope. This throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks, with one man beckoned from the rest below, bowing his head against the steepy mount to climb to his happiness, would be well expressed in *my* condition”—as a painting.

“Aye, sir, but hear me on,” says the poet. He looks around them and lowers his voice. “All those who were his *fellows* but of late, some *better* than his value,”—richer than he, “who for the moment follow his strides, fill his lobbies with attendance, rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear, make *sacred* even his *stirrup*, and through him *drink*, free as the air—”

“Aye, marry, what of these?”

“When Fortune, in her shift and change of mood, *spurns* her lately beloved, all his dependants who laboured after him to the mountain’s top, even on their knees and hands, *let him slip down!*—not *one* accompanying his *declining* foot!”

The painter is hardly impressed. “’Tis common: a thousand moral paintings I can show that shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune’s more pregnantly than *words*.” He scans the crowd of men around them, all seeking patronage. “Yet you do well to show Lord Timon that ordinary eyes have seen the foot above the head”—perceived the danger.

A trumpet sounds to herald the host, who comes outside to greet his arriving guests. Followed by several of his household servants, the nobleman nods courteously to each visitor. Walking with him is a messenger sent by Lord Ventidius.

Timon asks, concerned, “*Imprisoned* is he, say you?”

“Aye, my good lord! *Five talents* is his debt,”—an enormous amount of money, “his means most short, his creditors most strict! Your honourable letter he desires, to those who have shut him up—which, failing, *periods his comfort!*”—ends his hope.

“Noble *Ventidius!*” says Timon, dismayed. “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.”

“Your Lordship ever binds him!”

“Commend me to him,” says Timon. “I will send his ransom—and, bid him, being enfranchisèd, come to me. ’Tis not enough to help the feeble up but not to support him *after*. Fare you well.”

The messenger bows. “All happiness to Your Honour!” He hurries away to free his master from the creditors’ bondage.

An older Athenian approaches. “Lord Timon, hear me speak!”

The host smiles. “Freely, good father.”

“Thou hast a servant named Lucilius.”

“I have so; what of him?”

“Most noble Timon, call the man before thee,” demands the graybeard.

Timon asks the servants with him, “Attends he here, or no? Lucilius!”

The young man comes forward. “Here, at your lordship’s service.”

The petitioner frowns. “This *fellow* here, Lord Timon, this thy *creature*, by night *frequents my house!* I am a man that from my first have been inclinèd to *thrift*—and my estate deserves an heir more raisèd than one which *holds a trencher!*”—a servant who carries others’ food.

“Well; what further?”

“Only one 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”—not *gentleman*—“attempts her love! I prithee, noble lord, join *with* me to forbid him her resort!—myself have spoken in vain!”

“The man is honest—”

“Therefore he *will* be, Timon,” insists the Athenian. “His honesty rewards him in *itself*; it must not *bear my daughter!*”—poor phrasing, he learns, as men in a nearby throng of artisans chuckle at *bare*.

“Does she love him?”

The old man scoffs. “She is young and apt! Our *own* precedent passions do instruct us what levity’s in *youth*.”

Timon asks Lucilius, “Love you the maid?”

“Aye, my good lord!—and she *accepts* of it!”

The father shakes his head. “If in her marriage *my consent* be missing, I call the *gods* to witness, I will choose forth mine heir from the *beggars* of the world, and *dispossess her of all!*”

Timon asks, calmly, “How shall she be endowèd if she be mated with an *equal* husband?”

“Three talents on the present; in future, all.”

Timon regards Lucilius kindly. “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.”

The old Athenian smiles—but raises an eyebrow. “Most noble lord, to this empawn me your honour, and she is his.”

“My hand to thee,” says Timon, “mine honour on my promise.” They shake hands.

Young Lucilius bows, tearfully overjoyed. “Humbly I thank Your Lordship! Never may the state or fortune fall into my keeping which is not owed to *you!*”

The placated parent hurries away to speak with Lord Timon’s steward about the money.

The poet approaches Timon and bows. He proffers the manuscript, copied from wax notes. “Vouchsafe my labour, and long live Your Lordship!”

Timon accepts the volume, still tied with string. “I thank you; you shall hear from me anon! Go not away!” He turns to the painter. “What have you there, my friend?” he asks, smiling at several illustrious guests who are passing near them.

“A piece of painting, which I do beseech Your Lordship to accept.”

“Painting is welcome,” says Timon, barely glancing at the picture. He muses. “A painting is almost the *natural* man: when man’s nature traffics with dishonour, he is but an *out side*; these penciled figures *are* even such as they give out.

“I like your work; and you shall *find* I like it!” Timon promises. “Wait in attendance till you hear further from me.”

The painter bows. “The gods preserve ye.”

Timon turns to the jeweler. “Well fare *you*, gentleman! Give me your hand; we must needs dine together! Sir, your jewel hath suffered under praise....”

“*What*, my lord?—*dispraise?*”

“More a satiety of *commendations!*—if I should pay you for’t as ’tis extolled, it would unclew me quite!”—unravel all his holdings. Those nearby laugh at the absurd idea.

“My lord, ’tis rated as those who *sell* would give!”—offered at the lower pricing used among merchants, the jeweler claims. “But as you well know, things of like value, differing in the *owners*, are prized in accord with their masters! Believe’t, dear lord: you’ll mend the jewel by the wearing of it!”

“Well mocked,” laughs Timon modestly.

“*No*, my good lord!” says the nearby merchant obsequiously, “he speaks the common tongue, which *all* men speak *with* him!”

Timon grins, spotting an obvious exception to that: a thin, ill-dressed old man trudging past the front gate. “Look who comes here!” He turns and asks the guests, “Will you be *chided?*”

The newcomer, surveying the gathering with a smoldering glare, is Apemantus, a thinker with a dour outlook; all too often his crude, offhand gibes are pointed—and, even worse, accurate.

“We’ll bear with Your Lordship,” says the little jeweler bravely.

But the textiles merchant, who has often smarted under the curmudgeon flogging wit, foresees no shelter, even in their host’s presence. “He’ll spare none!” he warns.

Timon smiles. “Good *morrow* to thee, gentle Apemantus!”—the morning greeting is wry; the eccentric is known to sleep and rise without regard to the hour.

“Till I *be* gentle, stay thou”—wait—“for *thy* ‘Good morrow’—when thou art Timon’s *dog*, and these knaves *honest*.”

“Why dost thou call them *knaves?*” demands Timon. “Thou know’st them not!”

“Are they not *Athenians?*”

“Yes.”

“Then I repent not.”

The jeweler, who has not met the man, challenges: “You know *me*, Apemantus?”

“Thou know’st I *do*: I callèd thee by thy *name!*”—*knave*.

Timon is tickled, but still he scolds: “Thou art *proud*, Apemantus.”  
 “Of nothing so much as that I am *not like Timon*.”  
 “Whither art going?” asks the host—sure that he’s come here for free food.  
 Apemantus is looking around. “To knock out an honest Athenian’s brains.”  
 Timon feigns concern. “That’s a deed thou’lt die for!”  
 “Right—if doing *nothing* be death by the law.” In the truth-seeker’s view, there *is* no honest Athenian.  
 Timon shows him the painting. “How likest thou this picture, Apemantus?”  
 “The best for the *innocence*”—lack of workmanship.  
 Timon persists. “Wrought he not well who painted it?”  
 “He wrought better that made the *painter*; and yet he’s but a filthy piece of work.”  
 The artist sniffs. “You’re a dog!”  
 “Thy *mother’s* of *my generation!*”—his child. Old Apemantus’s eyebrows rise in challenge.  
 “What’s *she*, if I be a dog?”  
 Timon is always amused by the skeptic. “Wilt dine with me, Apemantus?”  
 “No—I eat not lords.”  
 Timon laughs. “If thou shouldst, thou wouldst anger ladies!”  
 “Oh, *they* eat lords,” Apemantus retorts. “*That* way they come not by great bellies.”  
 Timon laughs. “That’s a lascivious notion!”  
 Apemantus shrugs. “So thou *conceive* it; take it for thy *labour*.”  
 Timon enjoys the plays on words. “How dost thou like this *jewel*, Apemantus?” The seller frowns, but he opens a black-velvet pouch to show it.  
 “Not so well as plain-dealing—which will not cost a man a bit.”  
 Timon examines the stone. “What dost thou think ’tis worth?”  
 “Not worth my thinking.” Apemantus spots the writer. “How now, *poet*.”  
 The young man answers warily. “How now, philosopher.”  
 Apemantus frowns. “Thou liest.”  
 The poet is surprised. “Art *not* one?”  
 “Yes.”  
 “Then I lie not!”  
 “Art not a *poet*?” demands Apemantus.  
 “Yes.”  
 “Then *thou* liest: look in thy last work, where thou hast feigned *him*”—Timon—“as a *worthy* fellow.”  
 “That’s not feigned!—he *is* so!”  
 Apemantus snorts. “Yes, he is worthy of *thee*—and of *paying* thee for thy labour: he that loves to be *flattered* is worthy o’ the flatterer”—deserves him. He looks around at the obvious opulence. “Heavens, that *I* were a lord!”  
 Timon asks, “What wouldst do then, Apemantus?”  
 “E’en as Apemantus does now: hate a lord with my heart!”  
 “What, *thysself*?”  
 “Aye.”  
 “Wherefore?”  
 “That I had no *angry wit*”—disgust—“at being a *lord!*” He turns to the mercer. “Art not thou a merchant?”  
 “Aye, Apemantus.”  
 “May *traffic*”—trade—“confound thee, if the *gods* will not!”  
 “If traffic do it, the gods do it,” argues the merchant.  
 “Traffic *is* thy god,” mutters Apemantus, “and may thy god *confound* thee!”  
 A heralding horn sounds from behind the building, and a boy comes running along its side.  
 “What trumpet’s that?” asks Timon as the lad approaches and bows.

“’Tis *Alcibiades*, and some twenty horse, all of companionship!” The Athenian general and his chief captains are dismounting, leaving their steeds with men of the estate’s stable.

Lord Timon, himself a celebrated former commander, is delighted by the arrival of his compeer. “Pray, entertain them; give them guide to us!” Two of his attendants hurry away with the messenger.

“You must needs dine with me,” Timon tells the mercer. “Go you not hence till I have thanked you!” He points to one of the bolts of fine wool, woven with threads of silver and gold. “When dinner’s done, show me this piece!

“I am joyful of your sights!” he tells the visitors.

He turns, ready to greet the renowned warrior.

## Chapter Two Giving Honors

With a pounding of boots’ hard-leather heels on stone pavement, Alcibiades and his contingent stride to the front of the mansion.

“Most *welcome*, sir!” cries Timon warmly, bowing, then grasping his friend’s hand.

As military gentlemen with colorful sashes join the civilian guests, Apemantus watches their hand-shaking and bowing. *So, so, there! May aches contract and starve your supple joints! There should be small love ’mongst these sweet knaves!—just all this courtesy!*

The war is over, its profits made, the spoils divided. Many of the troops have been released, and these remaining officers are a state expense—and a potential threat.

Apemantus watches the Athenians, loathing them all. *The strain of Man is bred out—into baboon and monkey!*

Alcibiades beams at Timon. “Sir, you have dissolved my longing, and I feed most hungrily on your sight!”

“Right *welcome*, sir!” says Timon. “Ere we depart, we’ll share a bounteous time in diverse pleasures! Pray you, let us go in.” Walking with the general, he leads the officers and the other invited guests inside.

Apemantus follows them into the outer hall, but he stands apart, waiting for the way to clear. Two haughty lords approach him, ready to taunt the outcast—who is yawning.

“What time o’ day is ’t, Apemantus?” asks the tall one, smirking.

“Time to be *honest*.”

“That time serves still”—is always correct.

“The more accursèd *thou*, who always *omitt’st* it!”—being honest.

The questioner’s face turns an angry red.

“*Thou* art going to Lord Timon’s feast?” asks the plumper lord, looking at the man’s threadbare clothes.

Apemantus lives up to his reputation. “Aye, to see meat fill *knaves*, and wine heat *fools!*”

“Fare thee well, fare thee well,” says the portly patron, backing away.

“Thou art a fool to bid me farewell *twice*.”

“Why, Apemantus?”

“Shouldst have kept one to thyself, for *I* mean to give thee none.”

“Hang thyself!” says the taller man.

“No,” says Apemantus. “I will do nothing at *thy* bidding; make that request to thy friend.”

“*Away*, unpeaceable *dog!*” cries the heavy one, touching his sword’s hilt, “or I’ll *spurn* thee hence!”

Apemantus laughs. “I *will* fly like a dog—the heels o’ the *ass!*” he says, heading into the dining hall.



“He’s *opposite to humanity!*” complains the taller man. But they can smell the delectable scents of fine food drifting from the nobleman’s storied kitchen, and hear the guests’ amiable laughter. “Come, shall we in, and taste Lord Timon’s bounty? He outdoes the very heart of kindness!”

“He *pours* it out! Plutus, the *god* of gold, is but his *steward!* No meed”—obligation—“but he repays *sevenfold* above itself! No *gift* to him but breeds the giver a return exceeding all acquittance and use!”—principal and interest.

As more whiffs from the costly cookery reach them, the smaller man smiles. “The noblest *mind* he carries that ever governed a man!”

“Long may he live in *Fortune’s!*” cries his fat companion merrily. “Shall we in? I’ll keep you company,” he offers—as if he could be kept away from the savory smells.

Aromas—of baking bread, roasting meats, delicate sauces and seasonings—suffuse the air in the comfortable dining hall of the huge house. The many servants, supervised by Timon’s steward, Flavius, carry in steaming platters and pans, dishes and ewers, baskets of pastry, and flagons of wine. At the side, musicians try to make the music of their hautboys, wind instruments carved of wood, heard over the happy clamor and the clatter of cutlery. Spoons are provided for all; the guests use the knives they always carry.

Alcibiades sits with Timon at the head table, and many of Athens’ most distinguished lords are seated nearby, all animated by cordial conversation. At the back of the wide hall, Apemantus lurks, his shoulders drooping as always.

Lord Ventidius comes to Timon’s table, and the host rises to greet the newly arrived—recently freed—member of the aristocracy.

“Most *honoured* Timon,” says Ventidius as he kneels, “it hath pleased the gods to remember my father’s age, and call him to *long peace.*” The hall is silent for a moment, in respect for the lord’s sorrow at his father’s death. “He is gone *happy*—and has left *me rich!*”

Ventidius rises. “Then, as in *grateful* virtue I am bound to your free heart—from whose help I derived liberty—I do *return* those talents—*doubled*, with *thanks* and *service!*”

“Oh, by no *means*, honest Ventidius,” says Timon jovially. “You mistake my love; I give it freely ever!—and there’s none can truly say he *gives*, if he *receives!* Even if our betters”—the gods—“play at that game, *we* must not dare to imitate them!

“Faults that are *rich* are *fair!*” he adds—very much aware of the guests’ astonishment; he has turned down a sum that even the fabulously wealthy consider huge.

Ventidius bows. “A *noble* spirit!”

The guests rise, applauding in awe. “Nay, my lords,” says Timon, “*ceremony* was devised at first but to set a gloss on *faint* deeds—hollow welcome that *recants* goodness—*paltry* ere ’tis shown. But where there is *true friendship*, there needs none!

“Pray, sit! More welcome are ye to my fortunes than my fortune is to me.”

“My lord, we always have confessed it!”—acknowledged that, cries a senator, as Ventidius joins the other nobles. They all take their seats.

Apemantus laughs. *Confess and be hanged!* is a common gibe. “‘Confessed’ it! *Hanged* it, have you not?” he mutters; Timon’s friends are executing his wealth.

Timon hears the voice of his favorite font of piquant reproof, and motions him forward. “Oh, *Apemantus*, you are well come!”

“No, you shall not make *me* welcome!” protests the man. “I come to have thee thrust me out of doors.”

Timon laughs. “*Fie!*—thou’rt a *churl*; ye’ve got a humour there does not *become* a man! ’Tis much to blame!” He turns to the nearest table. “They say, my lords, ‘*ira furor brevis est*’—*anger is abbreviated fury.* “But yond man is *very* angry!” The noblemen laugh—too heartily—at the jest, and at the volubly irascible philosopher.

Timon tells a servant to seat Apemantus. “Go let him have a table by himself—for neither does he affect company nor is he indeed *fit* for’t!”

“Let me stay at thine own peril, Timon,” says Apemantus. “I come to *observe*; I give thee warning of’t...”

Timon nods. “I’ll take no heed of thee,” he says, as Apemantus seats himself not far away. “Thou’rt Athenian, and therefore *welcome*.”

“Prithee let my *meat* make thee silent; I myself desire no power to do so.”

But as the others begin to sup, Apemantus merely watches, thinking. *I scorn thy meat!—’twould choke me, for I should ne’er flatter thee!*

*O you gods, what a number of men eat Timon, and he sees ’em not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man’s blood—and all the madness is, he cheers them on to it!*

*I wonder that men dare trust themselves with men. Methinks they should invite them without knives; good for their meat—as guests could not carve too-big portions for themselves—and safer for their lives! There’s much example for’t: the fellow that sits next him now, parts bread with him, pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, —between swigs—is the readiest man to kill him! It has been proven!*

*If I were a large man, I should fear to drink at meals, lest they should spy my windpipe’s endangered nodes; great men should drink with leather on their throats!*

“My lord in *heart!*” cries Timon, raising his cup to salute Alcibiades. “And let the health go round!”—the salutation be seconded.

The other guests hoist their goblets. “Let it flow *this* way, my good lord!” cries a fawning senator, pouring from a flagon.

- The cynic laughs. *‘Flow this way’! A brave fellow!—he keeps his tides well! Those healths will make thee and thy state look ill, Timon. Apemantus lifts his own cup. Here’s that which is too weak to be a sinner: honest water, which ne’er left man i’ the mire! This and my food are equals; there’s no odds. Feasts are too proud to give thanks to the gods!*

Silently, he offers his own prayer:

*Apemantus’s grace.*

*‘Immortal gods, I crave no pelf;*

*I pray for no man but my self.*

*Grant I may never prove so fond*

*As to trust a man, or his oath for bond—*

*Or a harlot for her weeping,*

*Or a dog that seems a-sleeping,*

*Or a jailer with my freedom—*

*Or my friends, if I should need ’em!*

*Amen.’*

*So, fall to’t!* he thinks, as the gentlemen feast. *Rich men sin, but I eat root.*

He bites into the raw carrot he brought with him, sips some water, and groans as his stomach growls. *Much good may it do thy good heart, Apemantus.*

At the front, Timon notices that his wartime friend seems troubled. “Captain Alcibiades, your heart’s in the *field* now.”

“My heart is ever at your service, my lord,” says the general.

Timon understands military men: “You had rather be at a *breakfast of enemies* than a dinner of friends!”

Alcibiades remembers foes their forces defeated. “If they were bleeding *anew*, my lord—there’s no meat like ’em!” He beams at Timon. “I could wish my best friend at such a feast!”

- *And I would that all these flatterers were thine enemies*, thinks Apemantus, munching on his vegetable, but smelling gravy, *so that then thou mightst kill ’em and bid me to ’em!*

Alcibiades’ smile fades, his mood short-lived; one of his best officers has been arrested here in Athens after killing a civilian in a duel.

A nobleman at Timon's table gushes, "Might we but have the *happiness*, my lord, that *you* would for once use *our* hearts—whereby we might express some *part* of our zeals!—we should think ourselves forever perfected!"—complete and satisfied.

Timon smiles. "Oh, no doubt, my good friends, the gods themselves have provided that I *shall* have *much* help from you!—how had you been my *friends*, else? Why have you that charitable title from among thousands, did not you chiefly belong to my *heart*?"

"I have told more of you to myself than you can with modesty speak in your own behalf; and thus far I *confirm* you!"

"O you gods," think I, 'what need we *have* any friends, if we should ne'er have *need* of 'em?' They were the most needless creatures living should we ne'er have *use* for 'em, and would most resemble sweet musical instruments hung up in cases, that keep their sounds to themselves!"

He smiles at the guests. "Why, I have often wished myself *poorer*, so that I might come *nearer* to you! We are born to do benefits—and what better or properer can we call *our own* than the riches of our *friends*?"

"Oh, what a precious comfort 'tis, to have so many like *brothers* commanding one another's fortunes!"

He wants to say more, but his voice is choked with emotion. "Oh," he adds, "*joy* has made away even ere 't can be born! Mine eyes cannot hold back water, methinks," he says, tears welling. "To forget their faults, I drink to *you*!"

- Apemantus shakes his head. *Thou weapest to make drink for them, Timon!*

"Joy had the like conception in *our* eyes!" claims another lord, lifting his cup. "And *at that instant*," he says, wiping an eye, "came out like a baby!"

- *I have to think that baby's a bastard!* laughs Apemantus.

"I promise you, my lord," adds a third lord, "you've moved me much!"

"*Much!*" laughs Apemantus aloud, drawing stares; he know what riches Timon has bestowed upon the already-wealthy nobleman.

A horn's tucket sounds at the front of the great hall. Soon, Flavius comes to the host and bows.

"What means that trumpet?" asks Timon. "How now?"

"Please you, my lord, there are certain ladies most desirous of admittance."

"Ladies! What are their wills?"

"There comes with them a forerunner, my lord, who bears the office of *signifying* their pleasures."

"I pray, let them be admitted," says Timon, and the steward signals for the visitors to enter.

The first to appear is a young dancer, this evening in the guise of a concupiscent Cupid, his muscles glistening with a sheen of lotion. "Hail to thee, worthy Timon!" cries the youth, "and to all that taste of his bounties!"

"The five *best senses* acknowledge thee their patron, and come freely to 'gratulate thy plenteous bosom!"

"Then Taste, Touch—*all!*—pleasèd from *thy table* rise!—and now they come to feast thine eyes!"

"They're welcome all!" cries Timon, happily. "Let 'em have kind admittance! *Music*, make them welcome!"

"You see, my lord, how amply you're belovèd!" a lord tells him.

Cupid speaks to the musicians, and they play as he has directed. He dashes to the doors, and returns leading a masque: ladies clothed provocatively as Amazon warriors. They dance in colorful swirls before the delighted company.

As the lords beam and clap, Apemantus scowls. *Hoy-day! What a sweep of vanity comes this way! They dance!—they are mad-women!*

*Such madness is the glory of this life, as this pomp shows to a little oil and root!*—compared with his simple fare. *We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves, and spend our flatteries*

*drinking to those men upon whose age we will spit it up again with poisonous spite and envy!  
Who lives that's not depraved, nor deprives?—who dies that bears not to the grave one spurning  
of his friend?*

He watches Timon, who is looking out happily over the celebrants. *I should fear that those  
that dance before me now would one day stamp upon me! It has been done: men shut their doors  
against a setting sun.*

The lords rise from the tables, and each singles out an Amazon; then all join in dancing to the  
strains of lutes and hautboys.

Timon speaks to a servant, who bows and hurries away. Calls the host, “You have done our  
pleasures much *grace*, fair ladies!—set a fair *fashion* on our entertainment, which was not half so  
beautiful and kind! You have added *worth* unto't, and *lustre*, and entertained me with mine own  
device! I am to *thank* you for't!”

One glowing lady protests modestly: “My lord, you take *us* for the *best!*”

Apemantus concurs, sourly: *In faith!*—*for the worst is not filthy, and would withhold taking,  
—resist seduction— I suspect!*

Timon points toward a room beyond, where fruit, cheese and wine are being set out, as he  
had just directed. “Ladies, there is an idle *banquet* attends you! Please you to dispose  
yourselves!”

There follows considerable curtsying. “Most thankfully, my lord!” the Amazons reply, as  
they, their lithe Cupid, and their new companions move away to enjoy the repast.

Timon calls his steward. “Flavius!”

“My lord?”

“The little casket bring me hither.”

“Yes, my lord.” *More jewels yet!* thinks Flavius, as he goes to fetch the brass-bound wooden  
box of precious stones. He has been in Timon's service since before the war. *There is no crossing  
him in's humour, else I would tell him well! I' faith I should!*—*when all is spent, he'd be  
'crossèd'* then—*if he could!* His sour jest: that Timon will miss the crucifix-stamped gold coins.

*'Tis pity his bounty has not eyes behind, so the man might ne'er be wretched for his mind!* He  
hurries past several patricians who are already preparing to depart.

“Where be our men?” one is demanding.

A servant by the side door bows. “Here, my lord, in readiness.”

Another noblemen commands, “Our horses!”

But Timon has joined them, to bid them farewell; Flavius brings him the casket.

“O my friends, I have one word to say to you!” says Timon. “Look you, my good lord, I must  
entreat you, honour me so much as to advance.” Lord Lucius steps toward him. “This jewel—  
accept it and wear it, kind my lord!”

The recipient is pleased. “I am so far already in your gifts—”

“So are we all!” says another guest.

A boy from the stable trots in and bows to Timon. “My lord, there are certain nobles of the  
*Senate* newly alighted, and come to visit you!”

“They are fairly welcome!”

“I beseech Your Honour, vouchsafe me a word,” pleads Flavius quietly, as the lad goes to  
bring in a new round of visitors. “It does concern you near”—personally.

“Near? Why then, another time I'll hear thee,” says Timon, carelessly. “I prithee, let us be  
provided to show them entertainment!”

Flavius simply stares; the provisions are nearly exhausted. *I scarce know how!*

Hurrying, almost out of breath, an elderly servant has come up from the stable. “May it please  
Your Honour, *Lord Lucius*, out of his free love, hath presented to you *four milk-white horses*,  
with trappings of *silver!*”

“I shall accept them fairly; let the presents be worthily entertained,” says Timon, as another  
man comes to them, similarly stirred. “How now! What news?”

“Please you, my lord, that honourable gentleman *Lord Lucullus* entreats your company tomorrow to *hunt* with him—and has sent Your Honour *two brace of greyhounds!*”

Timon is very pleased with the judge’s gifts. “I’ll hunt with him; and let them be received not without fair *reward!*”

Now alarmed even further, Flavius frets: *What will this come to? He commands us to provide, and gives great gifts—and all out of an empty coffer!*

*Nor will he know his purse, or yield me this: to show him what a beggar his heart is, being of no power to make his wishes good! His promises fly so far beyond his state that what he speaks is all in debt!—he owes for every word!*

*He is so kind that he now pays interest for ’t! His land is put onto their books!*

*Well I would I were gently put out of office before I were forcèd out!*

He looks around the boisterous hall, still teeming with sated sycophants. *Happier is he that has no friend to feed, than such as do e’en enemies exceed!*

*I bleed inwardly for my lord.*

He goes to see to the stabling of Timon’s new horses and the kenneling of his four new racing hounds.

Timon addresses his departing guests. “You do yourselves much *wrong*: you abate too much of your own *merits!*” he tells a senator. “Here, my lord, a trifle of our love!” He offers a precious gemstone, glinting in his hand.

“With more-than-common *thanks* I will receive it!”

Says another lord, watching, “Oh, he’s the very *soul* of bounty!”

Timon regards Sempronius, another prominent Athenian. “And now I remember, my lord, that you gave good words the other day of a bay courser I rode on. It is *yours* because you *liked* it!”

“Oh, I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, in *that!*”

“You may take my word, my lord: I know that no man can justly *praise* but what he does *affect*; and I weigh my *friend’s* affection with mine own! I’ll tell you true: I so call *you!*”

“Oh, none so *welcome!*” says Sempronius, as the guests crowd around them.

Timon tells the men congregated at his doors, “I take yours, and all several visitations, so kindly to heart that ’tis not enough to *give!* Methinks I could deal *kingdoms* to my friends, and ne’er be weary!”

He sees that his friend the general—who has recently conquered just such realms for Athens—is downcast. “Alcibiades, thou art a *soldier*, and therefore seldom *rich*; life comes uncharitably to thee, for all *thy* living is ’mongst the dead, and all the *lands* thou hast lie in a pitched field”—under tents.

Alcibiades smiles. “Aye, *defiled* land, my lord!”—a dry jest on *files*, ranks of troops.

Timon intends to present him with a grand gift, but a fat senator swoops in and intervenes: “We are so virtuously *bound!*”

“And so am I to you!” says Timon.

“So infinitely *endeared!*” insists a second lord.

“All to *you!*” cries Timon, bowing. “Lights, more *lights!*” Servants bring lanterns, and accompany the guests out to their waiting carriages and saddled horses.

Says Sempronius, bowing, “The best of happiness, honour and fortunes *keep* you, Lord Timon!”

“Ready for his *friends!*” amends the host, as the guests leave.

Soon the hall is nearly empty.

Apemantus approaches the prince of philanthropy. “What a *broil’s* here!—serving of *beaks*, and jutting-out of *butts!* I doubt whether their *legs* be worthy the sums that are given for ’em! Methinks false hearts should never have *sound* legs,”—ones able to kneel, “since honest fools lay out their *wealth* for *court’sies!*”

“Friendship’s full of *dregs!*”—a drink fouled with sediment.

Timon chuckles, and amiably claps an arm around the aging philosopher's frail shoulders. "Now, Apemantus, if thou wert not sullen, I would be good to *thee!*"

"No. I'll have nothing," says Apemantus. "For if *I* should be bribed, too, there would be none left to rail upon thee, and then thou wouldst sin the *faster!*"

"Thou givest so long, Timon, I fear me thou wilt give away *thyself*, shortly—in *paper!*"—notes promising payment. He wags his head. "What *need* these feasts, pomps and vain-glories?"

Timon laughs. "Nay, once you begin to rail on *society*, I am sworn not to give regard to you! Farewell!—and come with *better* music!" He leaves the hall, and happily climbs the wide stairs to his luxurious living quarters.

Outside, the servants are still busy on the torch-lighted portico, seeing off the guests. Apemantus stands alone in the hall, surveying garbage-laden tables, the dozens of extinguished candles.

*So thou wilt not hear me now. Thou shalt not then!—I'll lock thy haven from thee!  
Oh, that men's ears should be to counsel deaf, but not to flattery!*

### Chapter Three Payments Demanded

The following afternoon, Lord Sempronius sits at home, perturbed. He takes steps to stay abreast of the affairs of those who owe others considerable sums of money—and especially one such debtor, Lord Timon.

He examines again the paper in his hands. *To Varro and to Isidore he owes nine thousand, besides my former sum—which makes the total five and twenty! And lately, five thousand!*

*Still in a motion of raging waste! It cannot hold!—it will not!*

He is appalled by the nobleman's extravagant generosity. *If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog and give it to Timon; why, the dog coins gold! If I would sell my horse and buy two more, better than it, why, give my horse to Timon—ask nothing, give it him—and it foals me straight a stable of horses!*

*No porter is at his gate, but rather one who smiles and ever invites all that pass by!*

*It cannot hold! No reasoning can sound his state with assurance!*

"Caphis, *ho!* Caphis, I say!"

"Here, sir," says the servant, coming into the room. "What is your pleasure?"

"Get on your cloak, and hasten you to Lord Timon! Importune him for *my moneys!* And be not ceased with slight denial, nor silenced by 'Commend me to your master.'" He frowns, pointing at the lethargic servant: "With the cap playing in your right hand *thus*."

"But tell him *my* uses *cry* to me!"—his own obligations are in arrears. "I must serve my turn"—pay what he owes—"out of *mine own!* His days and times are past, and my reliances on his fractured dates have smited my credit!"

"I love and honour him, but must not *break my back* to heal his *finger!* Immediate are my needs, and my relief must not be tossed in return to me in *words*, but must find immediate *supply!*"

"Get you gone. Put on a most *importunate* aspect, a visage of *demand!* For I do fear that when every feather sticks in its *own* wing,"—money has been paid where it's due, "Lord *Timon*, who flashes now as a *phoenix*, will be left a naked *gull!* Get you gone!"

"I go, sir." Caphis bows and turns toward the door, but the senator grabs his arm.

Says the annoyed lord, mocking, "*I, go, sir!*" Take the *bonds* along with you!—and have the *dates'* income!"—collect interest, too. Usury is considered wrong, but the rich generously excuse themselves for profiting by it.

"I will, sir," says Caphis, as Sempronius thrusts those documents at him.

"*Go!*"

In a corridor of Lord Timon's great house, Flavius paces, waiting for his master to return for the noon meal; the steward's hands are full of new letters demanding payment for goods and services.

*No care, no stop!—so insensible to expense that he will neither know how to maintain it, nor cease his flow of riot!—takes no account how things go from him, nor adopts any care about what is coming! Never was there such a mind—to be so unwise to be so kind!*

*What shall be done? He will not hear till he feel!—I must be round with him! Now he comes from hunting! Fie, fie, fie, fie!*

Just outside the mansion, Caphis arrives to find two other men, servants of Lords Isidore and Varro, already waiting. He greets one, calling him, as is their custom, by the name of the man's master. "Good even, Varro! What, you come for money?"

"Is't not your business, too?"

"It is! And yours, too, Isidore?"

Lord Isidore's servant nods. "It is so."

Caphis dislikes such pestering. "Would we were *all* discharged"—paid what's due.

"I *fear* it!" Varro's man, doubting success, makes a jest on *discharged* from their *positions*.

Caphis spots Timon. "Here comes the lord."

Timon strides up from the stable, returning from a morning of hunting on horseback. He is accompanied by Alcibiades and several of his officers.

"So soon as dinner's done, we'll forth again, my Alcibiades!" says Timon cheerfully. He approaches the waiting servants. "With me? What is your will?"

Caphis bows. "My lord, here is a note of certain dues..." He shows Timon the bonds.

"*Dues!*" laughs Timon. "Whence are you?"

"Of Athens, here, my lord."

Timon waves him away, not unkindly. "Go to my steward."

But Caphis is insistent. "Please it Your Lordship, *he* hath *put me off* for the succession of *nine days* this *month!* My master is awakened by great occasion to call upon *his own*—and humbly prays you that you'll suit with your *other* noble parts in giving him his right."

"Mine honest friend," says Timon, eager for lunch, "I prithee but repair to me next morning."

"Nay, good my lord—"

Timon starts away. "Contain thyself, good friend."

But a second man steps forward. "One *Varro's* servant, my good lord—"

And another: "From *Isidore*; he humbly prays your speedy payment—"

Caphis tries again: "If you did know, my lord, my master's *needs!*—"

Says Varro's servant, "'Twas due on *forfeiture*, my lord, *six weeks and past!*"

"Your steward *puts me off*, my lord!" says Isidore's man, "and I am sent *expressly* to *Your Lordship!*"

"Give me *breath!*" cries Timon. He calls to his guests, who are now approaching the house. "I do beseech you, good my lords, keep on; I'll wait upon you instantly."

His fellow fox-hunters go inside, passing Flavius as he emerges to look for his master.

Timon motions to him. "Come hither! Pray you, how goes the world, that I am thus encountered with clamorous demands of date-broken bonds, and the detention of long-since-due debts, against my honour?"

Flavius addresses the visiting servants. "Please you, gentlemen, the time is unagreeable to this business! Your importunacy cease till after dinner, so that I may make his lordship understand wherefore you are not paid."

"Do so, my friends," smiles Timon. "See them well entertained," he orders Flavius.

"Pray, draw near," the steward tells Timon. He speaks quietly as the two of them enter the mansion at the front.

“Stay, *stay!*” Caphis tells the others, who are about to follow. He will be happy to receive a meal from Timon’s celebrated kitchen—and now he foresees amusement. “Here comes a *fool* with *Apemantus!* Let’s ha’ some sport with ’em!”

“*Hang* him,” says Varro’s servant. “He’ll *abuse* us!”

“A plague upon him—the *dog!*” mutters Isidore’s man.

Apemantus and a jester—servant to one of Alcibiades’ officers, the disgraced captain—walk purposefully toward Timon’s home.

Varro’s man pointedly ignores Apemantus. “*Fool*, how dost?”

Apemantus looks puzzled. “Dost dialogue with thy shadow?”

The servant frowns. “I speak not to thee.”

“No, ’tis to *thyself!*” Apemantus urges his companion, “Come away.”

Isidore’s servant tells the jester, “*There’s* the fool!—hung *on your back* already!”—like a sign to humiliate a prisoner.

Apemantus retorts: “No, thou stand’st *single*; thou’rt not on him—yet!”

Caphis laughs. “Where’s the fool *now?*”

“He that asked the question,” Apemantus tells him. He glares. “Poor *rogues—usurers’* men, and *bawds* between *gold* and *want!*”

Caphis pretends not understand. “What are *we*, Apemantus?”

“*Asses!*”

“Why?”

“That you ask *me* what you are, and do not know *yourselves*,” says Apemantus. “Speak to ’em, fool!”

“How do you, gentlemen?” asks the sprightly old man in motley.

The servants greet him. “Gramercies, good fool!” says Caphis. “How does your mistress?”—*your wife*.

“She’s e’en now setting water upon fire,” the man replies mildly, “to scald such chickens as *you* are!”—implying, too, that they need hot baths to treat venereal ills. “Would we could see you at *Corinth!*”—known for its prostitution.

“*Good!*” laughs Apemantus heartily; he bows to the fool. “*Gramercy!*”

His friend notes the approach of a boy, running toward them. “Look you, here comes my master’s page.”

“Why, how now, *captain!*” says the pert lad of twelve to the fool. “What do you in this *wise* company? How dost *thou*, Apemantus?”

“I would I had a *switch* in my mouth,” says he, with schoolmasterly severity, “so that I might answer thee *profitably!*”

The boy shows him two papers, each folded and sealed with a blob of red wax. “Prithee, Apemantus, read me the superscription of these letters. I know not which is which.”

“Canst not read?”

“No.”

Apemantus rolls his eyes. “There will little learning die, then, the day thou art *hanged.*” He examines the letters. “This is to Lord Timon; this to Alcibiades. Go; thou wast born a *bastard*, and thou’lt die a *bawd!*”—a go-between.

The page grins at the slender man. “Thou wast *whelped* a dog, and thou shalt *famish!*—a *dog’s* death! Answer not,” he laughs, “I am *gone!*” He runs to the house, to deliver his master’s desperate pleas to Timon and Alcibiades.

“E’en *so!*” says Apemantus dryly; he calls after the boy, “Thou outrunnest *grace!*”—*me*. But he and the jester have come to plead as well; he starts forward. “Fool, I will take you to Lord Timon’s.”

“Will you *leave* me there?” asks the fool; his present master’s household may be breaking up.

Apemantus nods, but with a frown. “If *Timon* stay at home.” He turns to the waiting minions. “You three serve three usurers?”



The servants nod. “Aye. Would *they* served *us!*” says Varro’s man.

“So would I,” says Apemantus, “—as good a turn as ever *hangman* servèd *thief!*”

The fool peers at them. “Are you three usurers’ *men?*”

“Aye, fool.”

“I think no *usurer* has but a *fool* as his servant,” the clown opines. “My mistress is one,”—who profits from *interest*, “and I am *her* fool!”

He wants to learn what they have heard of his captain’s plight. “When men come to borrow from *your* masters, they approach sadly and go away *merry*; but they enter *my* master’s house merrily and go away sadly. The reason for this?”

Varro’s servant replies; word of an unlawful duel has spread. “I could render one,” he says knowingly.

But Apemantus takes that comment as a ribald one concerning sated, tired customers. “Do it then,” he growls, “that we may account thee a *whoremaster* and a *knave!*—notwithstanding which thou shalt be no *less* esteemèd!”

Varro’s servant challenges: “What *is* a whoremaster, fool?” he demands.

“A fool in good clothes—something like *thee*,” says the clown. “’Tis a *spirit*: sometimes it appears like a lord; sometime like a lawyer; sometime like an *alchemist*—with two stones more than his artificer’s one!”—*testicles*, in addition to the magical *philosopher’s stone*.

The jester continues: “He is very often like the knight,”—errant in two senses. “And generally in *all* shapes that Man goes *up and down* in, from thirteen to fourscore, *this* spirit walks in!”—a lifetime of tumefaction.

Varro’s man chuckles. “Thou art not altogether a fool...”

“Nor thou altogether a *wise* man,” retorts the clown. “As much *foolery* as I have, so much *wit* thou *lackest!*”

His old friend is delighted. “That answer might have become Apemantus!”

“Aside, *aside!*” says Caphis. “Here comes Lord Timon!” The creditors’ three servants motion the other two men away.

Apemantus heads toward the mansion—and the kitchen. “Come with me, fool, come.”

The clown nods. “I do not *always* follow lover, elder, brother and woman; sometimes the *philosopher!*” he notes grandly. He trails after Apemantus.

At a rear door, the two iconoclasts enter the house brought to ruin by folly, even as its master and major-domo emerge from the front.

“Pray you, walk near,” Flavius tells the agents, motioning for them to go into the house for a noon meal. “I’ll speak with you anon.” The would-be collectors move inside briskly.

“You make me *marvel!*” Timon tells him. “Wherefore ere this time have you not fully laid my state before me, that I might so have rated my *expense* as I had leave of *means?*”

“*You would not hear me!* At *many* leisures I proposed to!” cries Flavius.

“Go to!” Timon’s eyes narrow with suspicion. “Perchance some *individual vantages* you took, and when my indisposition put you back, that unaptness made you minister thus to *excuse* yourself!”

“Oh, my good lord, at *many* times I brought in my *accounts!*—*laid them before you!* You would throw them off, and say you found in them mine *honesty!*”

“When for some trifling present you have bid me send *so much in return* that I have *shook my head* and *wept!*—yea, ’gainst the authority of manners, *prayed* you to hold your hand more *closèd!*—I did endure *checks!*”—rebukes—“not *seldom* nor *slight* when I have prompted you about the ebb of your estate, and your great flow of *debts!*”

“My beloved lord, though you hear *now*, yet now’s a time when the *greatest* of your having lacks of *half* to pay your present debts!”

Lord Timon is decisive. “Let all my land be sold.”

Flavius moans. "'Tis all *engagèd!*—some forfeited and *gone!* And what remains will hardly *stop the mouth* of *present* dues! The future comes apace!—what shall defend the *interim?* And at *length?* How goes *your* reckoning?"

Timon is stunned. "To *Lacedaemon* did my land extend!"

"Oh, my good lord, the *world* is but a *word!*—were it all yours to give in a *breath*, how quickly were it *gone!*"

Timon starts to retort, but then he pauses—and pales. "You tell me true," he admits.

Poor Flavius is near tears. "If you suspect my husbandry of *falsehood*, call me before the exactest auditors and set me on to proof!

"So the gods bless me," he says earnestly, "when all our offices"—servants' duties—"have been oppressèd with riotous feeders, when our vaults have wept with drunken spilth of wine, when every room hath blazed with lights and brayed with minstrelsy, I have retired me to a wasteful tap"—an empty wine-barrel—"and set mine *eyes* at flow!"

Timon looks down, very discomfited. "Prithee, no more."

Flavius, exasperated, vents frustration: "'*Heavens,*' have I said, 'the *bounty* of this lord! How many prodigal bites have slaves and peasants *this* night englutted! *Who* is *not* Timon's?—what heart, head, sword, force, means, but is Lord *Timon's?* *Great* Timon—*noble, worthy, royal* Timon!"

"Ah, when the means are gone that *buy* this praise, the *breath* is gone whereof this praise is made! *Fast-won, fast-lost!* With the first winter shower, these *flies* are *gone!*"

Timon holds up a palm. "Come, sermon me no further! No *villainous* bounty hath yet passèd my heart: *unwisely*, not ignobly, have I given.

"Why dost thou weep? Canst thou lack awareness, thus to think I shall lack *friends?* Secure thy heart! If I would broach the *vessels* of my love, and try the argument of hearts by *borrowing*, men and men's fortunes could I use as freely as I can bid thee *speak!*"

Flavius wipes his eyes. "May *confirmation* bless your thoughts!"

Timon is smiling. "And, in some sort, these *wants* of mine are *crownèd*, in that I account them *blessings*: for by these shall I try *friends!* You shall perceive how you mistake my fortunes; I am *wealthy* in my friends!

"Within, there!" he calls, toward the open front doors, where several of his servants stand, waiting. "Flaminius! Servilius!" They hurry out to him and bow.

"My lord?" says Flaminius.

"I will dispatch you severally: you to Lord Lucius; to Lord Lucullus you—I hunted with his honour today. You, to Sempronius. Commend me to their loves, and say I am *proud* that my occasions have found a time to use 'em toward a supply of money." He thinks. "Let the request be fifty talents."

Flaminius gulps, and blinks several times, amazed at the huge sum—to be asked of *each*. But he nods. "As you have said, my lord." The other servants hurry back into the house to write notes stating the requests, and to find strong boxes in which to bring back the money. They soon set off on their quests.

Flavius has reason to be worried. *Lords Lucius and Lucullus? Hmm....*

Timon has served Athens well, as a civilian and as a warrior; he is well regarded by its governing nobles. "Go you, sir, to the *senators,*" he tells Flavius, "from whom, even unto the state's best health, I have *deservèd* this hearing! Bid 'em send on the instant a thousand talents to me!"

The steward stares, stricken; now he *must* tell Timon the worst news. "I have been so bold—for that I knew it the most *gentle* way—as with them to use your *signet* and your *name*; but they do shake their heads," he reports, flushing, "and I am here no richer in return!"

Timon is astounded. "Is't *true?* Can it *be?*"

"They answer, in a joint and corporate voice, that now they are at a *fall*, lack *treasure*, cannot do what they *would*, are *sorry*. You are *honourable....* But yet they could have *wishèd....* They

know not.... Something hath been *amiss*.... A noble nature may catch a *wrenching*.... Would all were *well*.... 'Tis *pity*....

“And so, pretending other serious matters, after distasteful looks and hard fractions, with certain *half-cups* and *cold-moving* nods,”—curt gestures, “they froze me into silence!”

“You *gods*, *reward* them!” says Timon indignantly. He thinks for a moment, then signals to the house to summon another servant.

He tells Flavius, “Prithee, man, look cheerly! These *old* fellows have their ingratitude in them hereditarily. Their blood is *cakèd*—’tis cold; it seldom flows; ’tis for lack of kindly *warmth* they are not kind! And a nature, as it grows again toward earth,”—approaches death, “is fashioned for the journey: dull and heavy!”

The servant reaches them. “Go to Ventidius—” Timon begins. He sees the steward’s look of despair. “Prithee, be not sad,” he tells Flavius kindly, “thou art true and honest! Ingenuously I speak: no blame belongs to *thee*.”

He tells the other servant, “Ventidius lately buried his father, by whose death he’s stepped into a great estate. When he was poor, imprisoned, and in scarcity of friends, I cleared him with five talents. Greet him from me; bid him suppose some good necessity touches his friend, who craves to be remembered with those five talents.” The man pales; but he bows and goes.

Timon turns back to Flavius. “That had, give’t these fellows to whom ’tis immediately due,” he says calmly. “Ne’er speak, nor *think*, that Timon’s fortunes ’mong his friends can *sink*!” he says confidently, giving the steward a pat on the back. He goes into the mansion to dine. He, Alcibiades, and the other lords still have a delightful afternoon of riding ahead.

Flavius follows him in, slowly. *I would I could not think it!*

*That thought is Bounty’s woe: being generous itself, it thinks all others so!*

## Chapter Four Friends Reply

A servant comes to Flaminius, who has been waiting in the judge’s home. “I have told my Lord of you; he is coming down to you.”

“I thank you, sir.”

The servant hears a heavy tread on the stairs. “Here’s my lord.”

*One of Lord Timon’s men?* thinks Lucullus happily. *A gift, I warrant! Why, this hits right—I dreamt of a silver basin and ewer last night!* He enters the parlor. “Flaminius, honest *Flaminius!* You are very respectfully *welcome*, sir!” He motions to his own servant. “Fill me some wine.”

Lord Lucullus is ebullient. “And how does that honourable, complete, free-hearted gentleman of Athens, thy very bountiful good lord and master?”

“His *health* is well sir.”

“I am right *glad* that his health is well, sir! And what hast thou there under thy cloak, pretty Flaminius?” asks the judge eagerly.

“Faith, nothing but an empty box, sir; which, in my lord’s behalf, I come to entreat Your Honour to supply. Having great and instant occasion to use fifty talents, he hath sent to Your Lordship to furnish him, nothing doubting your present assistance therein.”

Lucullus is taken aback. “*My, my, my, my!* ‘*Nothing doubting,*’ says he?”—regarding *fifty talents!* He paces, glancing at the floor. “*Alas*, good lord—a *noble* gentleman ’tis—if he would not keep *so good a house!* Many a time and often I ha’ dined with him, and *told* him of it, and come to him *again at supper* for the purpose of having him *spend less!* And yet he would embrace no counsel, take no warning by my coming....”

He shakes his head. “Every man has his fault, and generosity is his! I ha’ told him of’t, but I could ne’er get him *from* ’t.”

The servant has returned with a tray. “Please it Your Lordship, here is the wine.”

Lucullus hands a cup to Timon's man. "Flaminius, I have noted thee always *wise*. Here's to thee!" He takes a much-needed gulp. *Fifty talents!*

"Your Lordship speaks your pleasure," says Flaminius politely, taking a sip.

Lucullus regards him thoughtfully. "I have observed thee always for a *towardly* prompted spirit, to give thee thy due, and one that knows what belongs to *reason*—and canst use the time well, if the time use thee well. Good parts in thee!" He waves his servant away. "Get you gone, sirrah." The man goes to attend to his duties—out of earshot.

"Draw nearer, honest Flaminius," says Lucullus cordially. "Thy lord's a bountiful gentleman... but thou art wise, and thou knowest well enough, although thou comest to me, that this is no time to lend money!—especially upon bare friendship, without security.

"Here's three solidares for thee!" he says, pulling the small silver coins from his heavy pouch. He smiles. "Good boy, *wink* with me, and say thou sawest me not. Fare thee well!"

Flaminius stares at the money, anger rising; he sets his cup on a table. "Is't possible the world should so much *differ*?—are we *alive* that lived? *Fly*, damnèd *baseness*," he cries, flinging the silver at the nobleman, "to him who *worships* thee!"

"*Hmh!*" grunts Lucullus. "Now I see thou art a *fool!*—and *fit* for thy master!"

The coins settle on the floor. "May those add to the number that *scald* thee!" says Flaminius, furious. "Let *molten* coin be thy *damnation*, thou *disease* of a friend, and not its self!"

He storms from the house. *Has friendship such a faint and milky heart that it turns in less than two nights?*

*O you gods, I feel my master's passion!*

He looks back in disgust. *This slave, unto his honour, has my lord's meat in him—why should it thrive and turn to nutriment, when he is turned to poison? Oh, may diseases only work upon't!*

*And, when he's sick to death, let not that part of nature which my lord paid for be of any power to expel sickness—but prolong its hour!*

Lord Lucius and three older gentlemen—two who prosper by handling others' goods on land, and a ship's captain from Sicily—stroll through a public square near the Senate after enjoying a heavy lunch together this afternoon.

"Who, the Lord Timon?" says Lucius. "He is my very good friend, and an honourable gentleman!"

"We know him for no less," say the fleet magnate, "though we are but strangers to him. But I can tell you one thing, my lord, and which I hear from common rumours: now Lord Timon's *happy* hours are done and past, and his estate shrinks from him."

"*Fie, no*, do not believe it!" laughs Lucius, "*he* cannot want for money!"

The owner of vast warehousing stops. "But believe you this, my lord: that not long ago one of his men was with the Lord Lucullus to *borrow fifty talents!*—nay, *urged extremely* for't, and showed what *necessity* belonged to't—and yet was *denièd!*"

"*What?*" Young Lucius is aware of the judge's great wealth—and of the many gifts Timon has rained upon him.

The warehouse proprietor confirms: "I tell you, *denied*, my lord!"

"What a strange case was that!" mutters Lucius. "Now, before the gods, I am *ashamed* on't! Denied *that* honourable man? There was very little honour showed in't!

"For my *own* part, I must needs confess I have received some small kindnesses from him—as money, plate, jewels, and such-like trifles—nothing comparing to *this*. Yet, had Timon not mistook himself, and had sent instead to *me*, I should ne'er have denied his occasion for fifty talents"—spoken as if it were a trifling amount.

As the gentlemen walk on, Timon's man dashes into the square and peers around at the many faces. He spots Lucius. *See!—by good hap, yonder's my lord! I have sweated to see his honour!*

He runs to the nobleman and bows courteously. "My honoured lord—"

“Servilius. You are kindly met, sir,” says Lucius—nodding and hurrying along. “Fare thee well! Commend me to thine honourable, virtuous lord, my very exquisite friend!”

Servilius trots beside him. “May it please Your Honour, my lord hath sent—”

“*Ah!* What has he *sent?*” says Lucius, slowing his pace. “I am so much *endeared* to that lord!—he’s ever *sending!* How shall I *thank* him, thinkest thou? And what has he sent now?”

Servilius hands him a note. “He has only sent his present *occasion* now, my lord: requesting Your Lordship to supply his instant use with so many talents.”

Lord Lucius stops, unfolds the paper, and reads. “I know his lordship is but *merry* with me! He cannot want *fif—five hundred talents!*” He assumes that the servant is illiterate.

“But in the meantime,” says Servilius dryly, “he wants *less*, my lord. If his occasion were not virtuous, I should not urge it half so faithfully!” he says, wiping his forehead with a kerchief.

“Dost thou speak seriously, Servilius?”

“Upon my soul, ’tis true, sir!”

Lucius suddenly seems quite distraught. “What a wicked *beast* was I to *disfurnish* myself,” he moans, striking his own forehead, “against such a good time when I might ha’ shown myself honourably! How *unluckily* it happened that I should purchase *on the day before!*—for a *little part* to undo a great deal of *honour!*”

“Servilius, *now*, before the gods, I am not *able* to do it! The *more* beastly, I say, I was sending to use Lord Timon”—to borrow from him—“myself!—these gentlemen can witness! But now I would not for the wealth of *Athens* do ’t!”

“Commend me bountifully to his good lordship,” he urges apologetically, “and I hope his honour will conceive the fairest of me, because I have no power to be kind.”

He thinks for a moment. “And tell him this from me: I count it one of my greatest *afflictions*, say, that I cannot pleasure such an honourable gentleman.

“Good Servilius, will you befriend me so far as to use mine own words to him?”

Servilius is stone-faced, despite his anger. “Yes, sir,” he says, gravely, “I *shall.*” He turns sharply and strides away.

Lucius calls to his back. “I’ll look you out a good turn, Servilius!”

Turning his hands together fretfully, Lucius regard his associates in Mediterranean trade. “True as you *said!* Timon is shrunk *indeed!*—and he that’s once denied will hardly speed!” This second denial will not help; but he doesn’t say so.

Lucius takes polite leave of the others, and hastens away to confer with some other influential Athenians.

“Do you observe this, Hostilius?” asks the older gentleman.

“Aye, too well!” says the seafarer.

“Well, this is the world’s soul,” says the graybeard sadly, “and of just the same piece is *every* flatterer’s spirit! Who can call him his *friend* who dips in *that* same dish? For, in my knowing, Timon has been this lord’s *father*, and kept his credit with his purse, supported his estate—aye, *Timon’s* money has paid his men their wages! He ne’er drinks but *Timon’s* silver treads upon his lip; and yet...

“Oh, see the monstrousness of Man when he looks out in an *ungrateful* shape!

“He does deny him, in respect of this, what *charitable* men afford to *beggars!*”

The captain nods. “Religion *groans* at it.”

“As for mine own part, I never tasted of Timon’s bounties in my life, nor came any of his over me to mark me for his friend,” says the silver-haired gentleman. “Yet I protest, for his right-noble mind, illustrious virtue and honourable carriage, had his necessity made use of *me*, I would have put my *wealth* into donation!” They walk down toward the docks. “And the *best half* I should have turned to him, so much I love his heart!” the shipper amends.

Thinks the sea captain, *I perceive now but that men must learn with pity to dispense—for policy sits above conscience!*

Must he needs trouble *me* in 't—*eh?*—'bove all *others?*” whines Lord Sempronius, standing at his doorsill. “He might have tried Lord Lucius—or Lucullus—and now *Ventidius* is wealthy, too, whom he redeemed from prison. *All* these owe their estates unto him....”

“My lord, they have all been touched—and found *base* metal,” says Flaminius, “for they have all denied him.”

Sempronius is stunned. “*What?*—have *they* denied him? Have *Ventidius* and *Lucullus* denied him? And does he send to *me?*” Pondering, he looks away, up the hill from his mansion; in the distance, he can see the new Temple of Athena, the compassionate and generous goddess.

After a moment he grumbles, “*Third! Hmh!* It shows but little *love* or *judgment* in him. Must I be his *last* refuge?

“His friends thrive like *physicians*—*giving up on him!* Must *I* take the cure upon me?

“He has much *disgraced* me in't!” the senator argues. “I'm *angry* at him, who might have known my *place!* I see no sense for't but that his occasion might have wooed *me first!*—for it's my understanding that *I* was the first man that e'er received gifts from him!

“And does he think so backwardly of me *now*, that I'll requite it *last?*”

“No!” he tells Flaminius. “If I did so, it might prove an argument of *laughter* to the rest, and 'mongst lords I be thought a fool!

“I'd rather than the worth of *thrice* the sum that he had *sent to me first!*” claims Sempronius. “If but for my *mind's* sake, I'd had such a courage *then* to do him good!

“But *now*, return—and with *their* faint reply this answer join: who abates mine *honour* shall not know my *coin!*” He steps back into the house to nurse his wounded feelings—and he shuts the door firmly.

Timon's servant is surprised—and amazed by the facile hypocrisy. *Excellent! Your Lordship's a goodly villain!*

He thinks, wryly, *The Devil knew what he did when he made Man politic—but he crossed himself by 't! I cannot think but that, in the end, the villainies of Man will set him clear!*

If men are responsible for their choices, Satan is not to blame for their damnation.

*How fairly this lord strives, only to appear foul!—takes virtuous courses to be wicked, like those who under hot, ardent zeal would set whole realms on fire! Of such a nature is his politic love!*

Flaminius stands, dejected, on the stone porch.

*This was my lord's best hope; now all are fled, save only the gods! Now his friends are dead!*

*Doors that were ne'er acquainted with their warders for many a bounteous year must now be employed to guard their master secure.*

*And this is all a generous course allows: who cannot keep his wealth must keep his house!—stay inside, hidden.*

Just outside the tall, white front doors of the debtor's home, two of Lord Varro's men and one of Lord Lucius's arrive to find servants already sent by other noble creditors—all waiting, in a jocund mood, for Timon to venture out.

Varro's senior servant greets the others by their masters' names: “Well *met!* Good morrow, Titus and Hortensius!”

“The like to you, kind Varro!” says Titus's agent.

Hortensius's man greets the newcomers, feigning surprise. “*Lucius!* What?—do *we* meet together?”

“Aye, and I think one business does command us all—for mine is *money.*”

Titus's man nods, glancing at the rest. “So is theirs, and ours.”

Lucius's welcomes the latest bill collector. “And Sir Philotus too!”

“Good day, all at once,” says the knight's page, sixteen, smiling around at the others.

Lucius's servant is impatient "Welcome, good brother. What do you think the hour?"

"Labouring for nine."

"So much?"

"Is not my lord seen yet?" asks Philotus's boy.

"Not yet."

"I wonder on't; he was wont to shine at seven!"

"Aye, but the days are waxèd *shorter* with *him*," notes Lucius's servant sourly. "You must consider that a *prodigal's* course is like the *sun's*—but *not*, like its, recoverable! I fear 'tis deepest *winter* in Lord Timon's purse; that is, one may *reach* deep enough, and yet find little."

"I am of *your* fear for that," says the page.

Titus's man, here since dawn, is perturbed. "I'll show you how to observe a *strange* event," he offers. "Your lord sends now for *money*..."

"Most true, he does." Hortensius's emissary nods, as do the others.

"—but they now wear *jewels* of Timon's gift—*for* which we wait for the *money!*"

Hortensius's man feels the irony. "It *is* against my heart," he admits.

"Mark how strange it shows," adds Lucius's collector, "that Timon in this should *pay more than he owes!*—e'en as our lords wear rich jewels and send for *money* for 'em!"

Hortensius's agent confesses, "I'm wary of this charge, the gods can witness! I know my lord hath spent of Timon's wealth; and now *ingratitude* makes it worse than *stealth!*"

The older of Varro's servants agrees. "Yes, mine's three thousand crowns!"—thirty talents. "What's yours?"

"*Five* thousand mine," says the servant Lucius sent.

"'Tis much *deeper!*"—a play on *mine*. "And it should seem by the sum that *your* master's *confidence* was above mine's, else surely his had *equalled!*"

They see another servant coming toward the house. "One of Lord Timon's men," notes Titus's man.

"Flaminius!" says Lucius's emissary. "Sir, a word! Pray, is my lord ready to come forth?"

"No, indeed, he is not."

"We attend his lordship; pray signify so much."

"I need not tell him that," mutters Flaminius, hurrying past them. "He knows you are too diligent!" He hastens into the mansion and closing the right-hand double door behind him.

The other door opens, and Flavius emerges. His cloak, draped over a raised elbow, covers much of his face; he intends to brush past the collectors.

"*Hah!*" cries Lucius's man. "Is not that his *steward* muffled so? He goes away in a cloud! Call him, *call* him!"

Titus's man steps in front of Flavius. "Do you *hear*, sir!"

Varro's younger agent speaks: "By your leave, sir—"

Flavius lowers his arm. "What do ye ask of *me*, my friend?"

Titus's man steps even closer. "We wait for certain *money* here, sir."

Flavius sighs. "And if money were as 'certain' as your *waiting*, 'twere sure *enough!*"

"When your false *masters* ate of my lord's meat, why *then* proffered you not your sums and bills? Then they would *smile*, and *fawn* upon his debts—and take the *interest* into their gluttonous maws!

"You do yourselves but wrong to stir *me* up; let me pass quietly. Believe't," he says sadly, "my lord and I have made an end: *I* have no more to reckon, he to *spend.*"

They realize that Flavius has just lost his position—his livelihood.

"Aye, but *this* answer will not serve!" says Lucius's man.

"If 'twill not serve," Flavius replies, walking away from them, "'tis not so base as *you*—for you serve *knaves!*"

"*What?*" says Lord Varro's older man indignantly. "What does *his cashierèd* worship mutter?"

“No matter, what,” says the younger. “He’s *poor*, and that’s revenge enough. Who can speak broader than he who has no house to put his head in? Such may rail against great buildings!”

Again a door opens.

“Oh, here’s *Servilius*,” says Titus’s man. “Now we shall know some answer!”

Servilius appeals to their kinder natures. “If I might beseech you, gentlemen, to repair some other hour, I should derive much from’t; for, take’t on my soul, my lord leans wondrously to *discontent*! His comfortable temper has forsook him; he’s much out of *health*, and keeps to his chamber.”

Lucius’s man scoffs. “Many who keep their chambers are not *sick*! And, if he be so far beyond his health, methinks he should *the sooner* pay his debts, and make a clear way to the gods!”

Servilius looks up. “*Good gods!*” he cries sorrowfully.

“We cannot take *this* for *answer*, sir!” insists Titus’s man.

Inside the house, coming through his front hall and headed toward the door, Lord Timon is annoyed to find a servant stepping forward to detain him; he strides past brusquely.

“*Servilius, help!*” calls Flaminius from the door. “My lord!” he says, following Timon, “my lord...”

Timon, outside, finds several men surging toward him. “What, are my *doors* opposed against my passage? Have I been always free, yet must my *house* be my retentive *enemy*, my *jail*? The place in which I have feasted—does *it* now, like all *mankind*, show me an iron heart?”

Lucius’s man urges another of the servants: “*Put in* now, Titus!”

The man does so, saying, “My lord, here is my bill!”

“Here’s mine!”—and thus Lucius can deny that his servant was first to demand.

“And mine, my lord,” says Hortensius’s man.

“And ours, my lord,” adds Varro’s senior servant.

Sir Philotus’s boy and the others hold out papers. “All our bills!”

“*Knock me down* with ’em!” cries Timon angrily—as if they brandished the heavy, wide-bladed spears called *bills*. “Cleave me to the middle!”

“Alas, my lord—”

“Cut my *heart* into *sums*!” shouts Timon.

“Mine, *fifty talents*!”

“Count out *my blood*!”

“*Five thousand crowns*, my lord!”

“Five thousand *drops* pays *that*!” cries Timon, shoving away the bills. “What, *yours*?—and *yours*?”

Varro’s men both call to him: “My lord—” “My lord—”

“*Tear me, take me, and may the gods fall upon you!*” growls Timon, pushing them aside and storming away.

The servants exchange dour glances.

“Faith, I perceive our masters may throw their *caps* at their money!” says Hortensius’s man. “These debts may *well* be called ‘desperate’ ones,”—a legal term for those that can’t be collected, “for a *madman* owes ’em!”

One by one they drift away. None relishes delivering such bad news to his master.

Timon returns empty-handed from town, livid with anger, and followed again by Flavius. “They have put e’en my *breath* from me, the *slaves*! Creditors?—*devils*!”

“My dear lord—” the steward begins.

But Timon stares at the pavement, already pondering an idea. “What if it should be *so*...?”

“My lord—”

“I’ll *have* it so!” He looks up. “My steward!”

“Here, my lord.”



Timon is warming to his scheme. “So *fitly!*” he cries. “*Go!*—bid all my friends again—Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius! *All, sirrah, all!* I’ll *once more* feast the rascals!”

Flavius, wide-eyed, is dismayed. “Oh, my lord, you only speak from your distracted soul!—there is not so much left as to furnish out a *moderate* table!”

Timon smiles grimly. “Be’t not in thy care. *Go*, I charge thee, *invite them all!*”

“Let in the *tide of knaves* once more! My *cook* and I will provide!” he says, with a fierce grin.

## Chapter Five Called to Judgment

In the Athenian Senate, the matter of Alcibiades’ captain is under stern consideration. “My lord, you have *my* voice to it,” a senior senator tells the presiding nobleman, seconding a recommendation. “The fault’s *bloody*—’tis necessary he should *die!* Nothing *emboldens sin* so much as mercy!”

“Most *true*,” says another senator. “The law shall *bruise* him!”

They pause as Alcibiades arrives, with several attendants. He greets them: “Honour, health—and *compassion* to the Senate!”

The old senator frowns. “What, captain?” he demands—with obvious contempt; he knows why the general has come.

Alcibiades steps forward to address the legislators. “I am an humble suitor to your *virtues*—for *pity* is a virtue of *the law*—and none but tyrants use it *cruelly*.

“It pleases time and fortune to lie heavily upon a friend of mine, who *in hot blood* hath stepped into the law—which is past depth to those that without *heed* do plunge into’t.

“He is a man, setting this fate aside, of *comely virtues*. Nor did he soil the act”—the duel—“with *cowardice*, but with a *noble* fury and fair *spirit*—an honour in him which *buys out* his fault.

“Seeing his *reputation* touchèd to *death*, he did oppose his foe! And he did behoove his anger with such *sober* and *unseen* passion, ere ’twas spent, it appeared as if he had but proven an argument.” The duel was unavoidable, the general argues, and was handled with a solemn dignity.

“You undergo too strict a paradox,” says the presiding senator, “striving to make an *ugly* deed look *fair!* Your words have took such pains as if they laboured to bring *manslaughter* into *form*, and set *quarrelling* upon the head of *valour*, when it indeed is valour *misbegot*, and came into the world when sects and factions were newly born!”—the days of Cain and Abel.

“He’s *truly* valiant who can wisely suffer”—endure—“the worst that man can breathe, then make his wrongs his *outsides*, wearing them like his raiment, carelessly—and ne’er refer his injuries to his *heart*, bringing it into danger.

“If wrongs be evils that *force* us to kill, what folly ’tis to *hazard life* for ill!”

“My lord—” says Alcibiades.

“You cannot make gross *sins* look *clear!* To *revenge* is not valour; only to *bear.*”

Alcibiades regards the sleekly groomed and well-fed solons, and tries another tack. “My lords, then, under favour, pardon me if I *speak like a captain!*”

“Why *do* foolish men expose themselves to battle?—why not *endure* all threat—*sleep* upon’t—and without repugnance let the foes quietly *cut their throats!*”

“If there be such valour in the *bearing*, what make we *abroad?* Why, the *women* are more valiant that *stay at home*, if *bearing* carry it!—and the *ass* more captain than the lion—the *fellow* loaden with irons”—the shackled prisoner—“wiser than the *judge*, if wisdom be in *waiting!*”

“Oh, my lords, as you are *great*, be pitying and *good!* Who *cannot* condemn *rashness*; in cold blood to kill, I grant, is sin’s extremest gust. But *in defence*—under mercy, ’tis most *just!*”

“To be in anger is impiety; but who is the man that is never angry?”

“Weigh but the crime with this!” he pleads.

The haughty young senator shakes his head. “You breathe in vain.”

“*In vain!*” says Alcibiades angrily. “*His services done at Lacedaemon and Byzantium were a sufficient briber for his life!*”

The pompous old senator is startled by being contradicted. “*What’s that?*”

“I say, my lords, he has *done fair service!*—and slain in *fight* many of your *enemies!*” cries Alcibiades. “How full of *valour* did he bear himself in the last conflict, and made plenteous wounds!”

“He has made *too much* plenty with ’em,” says the younger senator dryly. “He’s a sworn *rioter!* He has a sin that often *drowns* him,”—in wine, “and takes his *valour prisoner!* If there were no *foes, that* were enough to overcome him! In that beastly fury he has been known to commit *outrages*, and to cherish *fraction!*”

“’Tis inferred by us that his days are foul, and his drinking dangerous!”

“He dies,” the senior senator rules.

“Hard Fate!” groans Alcibiades. “He *might* have died in *war*.”

“My lords, if not for any parts in *him*—though his *right arm* might purchase his own time, and be in debt to none!—yet, more to move you, take *my* deserts to his, and join ’em both! And, for I know your reverend ages love *security*, I’ll pawn to you my victories, all my honours, upon *his* good returns!”

Alcibiades sees their hard looks. “If by this crime he owes the law his life, why, let the *war* receive ’t in *valiant* gore; for law is strict—and war is nothing more!” If they will not pardon his friend, he proposes that they return the officer to service, for an honorable death in combat.

“We are for *law*,” says the bald old legislator coldly. “He dies; argue no more, on height of our displeasure! Friend or brother, he forfeits his own blood who spills another’s.”

“Must it be so?” Alcibiades look around the Senate, at the civilians who have sent him and his troops into many battles. “It *must not be!* My lords, I do *beseech* you—*know me!*”

Even the younger man is annoyed, hearing continued impertinence. “*What?*”

“Call me to your *remembrances!*”

Now a third senator voices indignation: “*What?*”

Alcibiades’ anger rises. “I cannot think but that your *age* has *forgot* me!—it could not else be that I should prove so base as to *sue* and be *denied* such common grace! My *wounds ache* at you!”

“Do you *dare our anger?*” cries the presiding senator, seething. His face is set and grim. “’Tis few in words, but spacious in *effect*: we *banish* thee forever!”

“Banish *me!* Banish your *dotage!*” shouts Alcibiades. “Banish the *usury* that makes the Senate *ugly!*” He knows that Timon’s pleas have been turned down.

The senator is furious. “If, after two days’ shine, Athens contain thee, attend our *weightier* judgment!” he warns. He closes the condemned soldier’s case: “And, not to *swell* our spirit, he shall be executed *immediately!*”

Alcibiades glares. “Now may the *gods* keep you *old* enough that you may live only in *bone*—so that none may *look* on you!” He stamps from the chamber.

Fuming, he stands outside, on the wide marble steps.

*I’m worse than a madman: I have kept back their foes, while they have counted their money and lent out their coin upon large interest! I myself am rich only in large hurts!*

*All those for this? Is this the balm that the usuring Senate pours onto captains’ wounds?*

*Banishment! It comes not ill!—I hate not to be banished: it is a cause worthy my spleen and fury, that I may strike at Athens!*

*I’ll rouse up my discontented troops, and lay for hearts!*

*’Tis honour in most lands to be at odds: soldiers should brook as little wrong as gods!*

**A**s if nothing had changed, the dining hall of Lord Timon’s house is again resplendent late this afternoon: candles brighten the room, and livery-clad servants are busy at a long

table laid for a feast worthy of the host's reputation. A nobleman coming in from the front of the house can see that Fortune surely smiles here again.

Lord Lucius, already arrived, greets the newer guest. "The good time of day to you, sir."

"I also wish it to you." Lord Lucullus moves closer and lowers his voice. "I think this honourable lord did but *try* us this other day!"—test their loyalty.

"Upon that were *my* thoughts entirely, when we encountered," says Lucius. "I'd *hope* it is not so low with him as he made it *seem*, in the trial of his several friends!"

The judge looks around, noting the table places, each elegantly furnished for supper. "It could not be, by the persuasion of this new feasting!"

"I should think so! He hath sent me an earnest invitation, which many more-dear occasions did urge me to put off; but he hath conjured me beyond them," sighs Lucius in feigned resignation, "and I must needs appear." He is already quite hungry—and there may well be gifts.

"In like manner was *I* in debt to my importunate business; but he would not hear my excuse! I *am* sorry that, when he sent to borrow of me, my provision was out," Lucullus adds.

"I am *sick with* that grief, too, as I understand how all things go."

Lucullus nods sadly "Every man bears it so."

"What would he have borrowed of you?"

"A thousand pieces."

Lucullus is impressed. "*A thousand pieces!*"

"What of you?"

"He sent to me, sir— Here he comes!"

"With all my heart, gentlemen both!" cries Lord Timon, approaching with Sempronius. He is especially glad to see the other two here. "And how fare you?"

Lucius smiles. "Ever at the best, hearing *well of Your Lordship!*"

Says Lucullus, "The swallow follows not *summer* more willing than we Your Lordship!"

*Nor more willingly* leave winter, thinks Timon, *such summer-birds are men!* "Gentlemen, our dinner will not recompense this long wait," he says humbly, and motions toward the lutenist, playing at the side. "Feast your *ears* with the music awhile," he says politely—adding, to himself, *if they will partake of so harsh a sound as the trumpet's!*—the call to Judgment. "We shall to 't presently!"

Lucius speaks quietly, warmly: "I hope it remains not unkindly with Your Lordship that I returned you an empty messenger...."

"Oh, sir, let it not trouble you." Not yet.

Lucullus, too, would again offer regret. "My noble lord—"

"Ah, my good *friend*, what cheer?"

"My most honourable lord, I am e'en *sick of shame*, that, when Your Lordship this other day sent to me, I was so unfortunate a beggar!"

"Think not on 't, sir," Timon advises. Not just yet.

"If you had sent but two hours before—"

"Let it not encumber your *better* remembrances." Timon addresses the room: "Come, bring in all together!" he calls.

His servants go quickly into the kitchen and return, led by Flavius, carrying gleaming silver trays. Under Timon's direction, the table is soon burdened with heavy, steaming pans.

- Lucullus eagerly rubs his hands together in anticipation, as the other noblemen stand watching the servants work. "All covered dishes!"

- "*Royal* cheer, I warrant you!" says Lucius.

- "Doubt not *that*, if money and the season can yield it!" says Sempronius.

- "How do you?" Lucius asks him, as they wait. "What's the news?"

- "Alcibiades is banished. Hear you of it?"

- The others are surprised. "Alcibiades *banished!*" says Lucullus.

- "'Tis *so*; be sure of it."

- Lucius is astonished. "How! *How?*"

- "I pray you, upon *what?*" asks his friend.

Lord Timon calls to them: "My *worthy friends*, will you draw near?"

- "I'll tell you more anon. Here's a noble feast toward!"

- The judge beams "This is the old man still!"

- But Sempronius still frets: "Will 't hold? Will 't *hold?*"

- Lucullus shrugs, looking at the inviting tables. "It *does*... but time will— And *so*..."

- Sempronius nods. "I do conceive." For now, they will take what they can.

"Each man to his *stool*," cries Timon—enjoying a privately crude sarcasm, "with that spur as he would to the lip of his *mistress!*"

"Your diet shall be in all places alike," he tells them, as the guests look to choose seats.

"Make not a *city* feast of it, letting the meat cool ere we can agree upon the first place! Sit, *sit!*"

As the men settle, he says, pointedly, "The gods *require* our thanks." Then, in a new manner, he speaks an odd invocation: "You great benefactors, *sprinkle* our society with *thankfulness!*"

"*Take* praise to yourselves as your own gifts," he tells the ceiling sourly, "but always reserve *giving*, lest Your Deities be *despisèd!*"

"Lend to each man just enough so that one need not lend to another—for were Your Godheads to *borrow* from men, *men* would *forsake the gods!*" he cries, his voice rising.

"Make the *meat* be belovèd more than the man who *gives* it!

"Let no assembly of *twenty* be without a score of *villains!*" he demands—wryly: a score *is* twenty. "If there sit twelve *women* at the table, let a dozen of them be... *as they are!*"

"As for the *rest* of your fees, O gods: the *senators* of Athens, together with the *common* log of people—what is *amiss* in them, you gods, make *suitable—for destruction!*" he shouts.

"As for these *present*, my *friends*," growls Timon, "as they are *nothing* to me, so in nothing *bless* them—and to *nothing* are they *welcome!*"

He surveys the guests' reddened faces. "Uncover, *dogs*, and *lap!*"

At the tables, lids are lifted, and the pans are found to be full—of warm water and stones.

The lords gape in puzzlement and indignation. "What does his lordship *mean?*" "I know *not!*"

Chairs scrape back harshly as the three noblemen rise, throwing down napkins, and glaring at the harrying host.

"Steaming, lukewarm water is your *perfection!*"—*essence*, calls Timon. "May you never behold a *better* feast, you *knot* of *mouth*-friends!

"This is Timon's *last!*" he cries, "who, *daubed* and *spattered* with your flattery, *washes* it off, and sprinkles in your *faces* your *reeking villainy!*" He seizes a large pan and hurls a stream of water at the heads of the startled lords. They back away, gasping, wiping their faces, brushing at their clothes.

"Live *loathèd* and *long*, most smiling, smooth, detested *parasites!*—courteous *destroyers*, affable *wolves*, meek *bears!*—you Fools of Fortune, *trencher*-friends!—Time's *flies*, cap-and-knee *slaves!*—vapours, and *minute*-jacks!

"May the *infinite* malady for man and beast"—death—"quite *encrust* you o'er!"

He watches the vilified visitors move hastily toward the doors. "What?—dost thou *go?* Soft!—take thy *physic* first!" cries Timon, as he flings dishes at them. "—*Thou*, too!—and *thou!*—"

"Stay," he yells, "I will *lend thee money!*—borrow *none!*" Under a new volley of splashing pans and their flying covers, the panicked nobles are driven from the hall.

"What, *all in motion?*" calls Timon after them. "Henceforth may there be *no* feast whereat a *villain's* not a *welcome* guest!"

"Burn, house! *Sink, Athens!*"

"Henceforth *hated* by Timon be *man and all humanity!*" He stalks angrily from the room, and climbs the front stairs to his chambers.

Warily, the guests return to the disordered dining area, intending to recover hastily dropped possessions.

“How *now*, my lords!” says Lucius, still staring in consternation.

“Know you the *basis* of Lord Timon’s fury?” asks Lucullus.

“Shit,” mutters Sempronius; who *doesn’t* know? He peers beneath his table. “Did you see my cap?”—actually a very costly plumed hat.

Lucullus wipes at his water-spotted doublet. “I have lost my gown!”—his judicial robe, removed for enthusiastic dining, and left draped on his chair.

Lucius stands amazed. “He’s but a *mad* lord, and nought but *mood* sways him! He gave me a jewel th’ other day,” he says, indignantly, “and now he has *beat it out of my hat!* Did you see my jewel?” He kneels, then crawls around, searching, on the floor.

“Did you see my cap?”

“Here ’tis.” Lucullus hands it to Sempronius.

“Here lies my gown!”

Lucius rises, looking around fearfully. “Let’s make no stay....”

“Lord Timon’s *mad!*” says Lucullus.

Sempronius nods. “I feel ’t in my bones,” he says—wryly, rubbing the shoulder struck by a pan. “One day he gives us diamonds, next day *stones!*”

**A** lone at sunset, Timon pauses outside a high wall of gray stone, his fury unwaning. *Let me look back upon thee!* he thinks, glad to have put the capital behind him. He tears off his clothing and, shouting invective, casts each item toward the city.

“O thou wall, that girdlest-in those *wolves*, *dive into the earth*, and *fence not Athens!*”

“Matrons, turn *incontinent!*”

Obedience, *fail* in children!

“*Slaves and fools*, pluck the grave, wrinkled Senate from the bench, and minister in their steads!

“To general *filths* convert, o’ the instant, green *virginity!*—do ’t in your parents’ eyes!

“Bankrupts, *hold fast!*—rather than render *back*, out with your *knives* and *cut your trusters’ throats!*”

“Bond servants, *steal!*—large-handed *robbers* your grave *masters* are, and *pillage* by law!

“Maid, go to thy master’s bed!—thy *mistress* is o’ the *brothel!*”

“Son of sixteen, pluck the padded crutch from thine old, limping sire!—and with it *beat out his brains!*”

“Piety, religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth, domestic awe, night-rest and neighborliness, instruction, manners, guilds and trades, degrees, observances, customs and laws, *decline to the confounding contraries* in *fear!*—and let *confusion!*—turmoil—“*live!*”

“*Plagues* incident to men, *heap* your potent and infectious fevers on Athens, *ripe* for *striking!* Thou, cold *sciatica*, *cripple* our senators, that their limbs may halt as lamely as their *manners!*”

“*Lust* and *liberties* creep in the minds and marrows of our youth, so that ’*gainst* the stream of virtue they may strive, and *drown* themselves in *riot!*”

“*Itches*, *blains* sow in all the Athenian *bosoms!*—and their *crop* be general *leprosy!*”

“May breath *infect* breath, so that their *society*, as their *friendship*, merely *poisons!*”

“Nothing I’ll bear from thee but *nakedness*, thou detestable town! Take thou *that*, too,” he cries, throwing the second muddy sandal, “with *multiplying banes!*”

“Timon will to the *woods*, where he shall find the unkindest *beast* more kinder than *mankind!*”

“The gods *confound!*—*hear* me, you good gods, *all!*—the *Athenians* both within and -out that wall!

“And grant that as *Timon* grows, his *hate* may grow!—to the whole *race* of mankind, high and low!

“*Amen!*”

Flavius summons the servants to Timon's empty pantry.  
"Hear you, Master Steward, where's our master?" asks the eldest. "Are we undone? Cast off? Nothing remaining?"

Flavius regards them mournfully. "*Alack*, my fellows, what should I say to you? Let me be recorded by the righteous gods, I am as poor as you!"

"Such a house, *broken!* So noble a master, *fallen!*" says the old man. "All *gone!* And *not one friend* to take *his* fortune by the arm, and go along with him."

A cook shakes his head sadly. "As we do turn our backs from our companion thrown into his *grave*, so Lord Timon's familiars to his buried *fortune* slink all away—leave with him their false vows like *purses pickèd empty!* And his poor self a dedicated *beggar* to the *air*, with his disease of all-shunnèd poverty, walks, like Contempt, alone."

He sees several stable workers straggling in. "More of our fellows."

"All broken implements of a ruined house," moans Flavius.

"Yet do our *hearts* wear Timon's livery!—that see I by our faces," says the old porter. "We are *fellows* still, serving alike in sorrow! Leakèd is our ship, and we, poor mates, stand on the dying deck, hearing the surge's threat! We must all part, into this sea of air...."

"Good fellows all, the latest of my wealth I'll share amongst you," Flavius tells them tearfully. "Whenever we shall meet, for *Timon's* sake let's *yet* be fellows. Let's shake our heads, and say, as 'twere a knell unto our master's fortunes, '*We have seen better days.*'"

He unties a sack of coins, savings accumulated over years of service to a generous master. "Let each take some." The younger men are hesitant. "Nay, put out all your hands!—not one word more!" He gives each of them part of his paltry sum. "Thus are we all: rich in *sorrow*, parting poor."

The older servants embrace, the younger shake hands; and with thanks to Flavius, they depart, going their several ways.

The steward listens to the silence of the house, soon to be claimed by some of Timon's many creditors, as they divide up his estate, claim his little remaining land.

*Oh, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us! Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt, since riches point to misery and contempt? Who would be so mocked by glory?*

*Or live in but a dream of friendship?—to have his pomp and all which state compounds but only painted, like his varnishèd friends?*

*Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart, undone by goodness! Strange, unusual blood, when a man's worst sin is that he does too much good! Who then dares to be half so kind again?—for bounty that makes gods does ever mar men.*

*My dearest lord—blessèd, to be most accursed; rich, only to be wretched—thy great fortunes are made thy chief afflictions!*

*Alas, kind lord! He's flung in rage from this ingrateful seat of monstrous friends; nor has he with him food to supply his life, or that which can command it!*

*I'll follow and inquire him out. I'll ever serve his mind with my best will; whilst I have gold, I'll be his steward still!*

## Chapter Six Gifts to the Purpose

The old pine woodland wends south, down to a narrow strip of sand along the craggy shore. Here Timon has found his new dwelling: a dank cavern carved, over countless centuries by the tides' rhythmic contention with land, in the low Greek hillside.

Standing this morning at the sheltered mouth of the cave, he reflects on the state of mankind—and soon he begins to rail, shouting over the calm ocean toward a vast blue sky.

“O blessèd, breeding *sun*, draw from the earth *rotten humidity*! Below thy *sister’s orb*,”—  
under moonlight, “*infect the air!*”

He paces. “*Twinnèd brothers of one womb*, whose procreation, residence, and birth are scarce  
dividant—touch them with *differing fortunes*, and make the greater *scorn* the lesser!

“Let *rich* natures—to whom may all *sores* lay *siege!*—bear great fortune but by *contempt for Nature!*”

“*Praise* this beggar, and deny ’t that *lord!* The senator shall bear contempt *hereditary*, the  
beggar *native honour!* It is the *pasture* that lards the one brother’s sides, the *want* that makes the  
other lean!

“Who dares—who dares in the impurity of *manhood?*—to stand upright and say, ‘*This man’s*  
a flatterer’? If *one* be, so are they *all!*—for every guise of fortune is smoothèd”—with praise—  
“by that *below* it!

“The *learnèd* pate ducks to the golden *fool!*”

“All is *oblique!*—there’s nothing *level* in our cursèd natures but *direct villainy!*”

“Therefore be *abhorred* all feasts, societies, and throngs of *Man!* His semblance—yea,  
*himself*—Timon *disdains!* Destruction *mangle* mankind!”

In the ensuing silence, he realizes that he is hungry.

Screened from casual view from the shore by dry, weathered brush, the cave—in its long  
past, once a refuge for animals, sometimes for paupers, often for thieves—has provided a battered  
spade. Timon’s foot pushes its blade into the moist soil beneath a rocky ledge jutting toward the  
shore. “*Earth*, yield me *root!* Whoever seeks for *better* from thee, sauce his palate with thy most  
operant *poison!*”

After considerable toil he uncovers and pulls up some edible roots. He also finds a rotting  
wooden lid.

*What is here?* he wonders, and digs further to unearth it. Using a rock, he breaks the corroded  
hasp of a big, antique lock. He unclasps the cover of the strong-box; rusting hinges creak as he  
pulls it open.

“*Gold!* Yellow, glittering, precious *gold!*” he cries—and bursts out laughing with bitter scorn.  
“*No*, gods!—I am no *idol* votarist! *Roots*, you clear heavens!” he demands.

He kneels to gather his musty food, then rinses it in a pan of sea-water. He bites off a chunk  
and munches, looking at the box.

Countless wind-driven ships have traversed the beautiful blue Aegean, engaged in commerce  
among the Mediterranean’s many ports, and some more distant. Along this shore not far from  
Athens, robbers have long profited by interrupting the movement of goods and gold by such  
vessels. And pirates of old plied these coastal waters, seizing treasure no longer needed on the  
ships they left sinking, pulling murdered seamen toward the bottom with them.

Timon lifts a fistful of glistening gold coins, their canvas sacks long since decayed to  
mildewed fibers. *Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair, wrong right, base noble, old*  
*young, coward valiant!*

*Hah*, you gods!—why *this?*

He laughs, chiding. “*What?*—*this*, you gods! Why, this will lug your priests and servants  
from your sides!—pluck stout men’s pillows from below their heads! This *yellow slave* will knit  
and break *religions!*—bless the *accursèd*, make *leprosy* adored!—place *thieves*, and give them  
title, knee, and approbation with senators on the *bench!*”

“*This* it is that makes the misshapen widow *wedded* again! She whose ulcerous sores the  
*hospital-house* would cast gorge at,”—vomit to see, “*this* embalms and spices into an *April day*  
again!”

He addresses the malleable metal: “Come, *damned earth*—thou common *whore* of mankind,  
that put’st *quarrels* among the routes of nations, I will make thee do thy *right* nature!” He tosses  
the coins back into the iron-bound box, and, struggling with the weight, drags it into the cave.

“Thou’rt *quick*”—alive with possibility, “but yet I’ll *bury* thee!” The gold gleams impassively. Timon laughs. “Thou wilt *go*, strong thief, when gouty *keepers* of thee cannot *stand!*”

He ponders the work of the callous prisoner that outlives all jailers.

Timon is startled by a noise: *A drum?* He can hear a military cadence coming from a distance down the shore.

“Nay, stay *thou* out as *earnest*”—as a first payment, he mutters, slipping some of the money into his coat pockets. With both hands he scoops up coins, still smooth and glossy despite the many decades of burial. He steps back into the sunlight and spills them onto a wide, flat rock, next to his few roots.

Then he manages to tug the heavy chest even further into shadow, to the rise at the very end of the cave; he hides the box with dead leaves and branches.

Outside again, looking down the shore from behind some straggling brush, Timon is surprised to see Alcibiades, dressed for battle and leading a wide, long column of many well armed soldiers. All are marching, to drum and fife, toward the old road north to Athens.

Alcibiades signals for his troops to halt. As he sends scouts to check the route ahead, he spots someone lurking in the bramble. He approaches boldly. “What art thou there? Speak!”

“A *beast*, as *thou* art,” replies Timon. “A *canker* gnaw thy heart, for showing me again the eyes of *Man!*”

Alcibiades pushes through the dry bushes and sees a man who is half naked. “What is thy name? Is *Man* so hateful to thee, who art *thysself* a man?”

“I am *Misanthropos*, and *hate* mankind! For *thy* part, I do wish thou wert a *dog*, that I might love thee *somewhat*.”

Alcibiades recognizes him, now, and smiles. “I know thee well!—but in thy fortunes am unlearnèd and strange.” He is joined by his concubines, Timandra and Phrynia.

Timon waves him away. “I know *thee*, too—and *more* than that I know of thee I desire *not* to know! Follow thy drum!—with *man*’s *blood* paint the ground *gules*, *gules!*”—the red of heraldry. “Religious canons, civil laws are *cruel*; then what should *war* be?”

He regards the younger woman thoughtfully. “This fell”—deadly—“whore of thine hath in her more destruction than thy *sword*, for all her cherubin look!” Her spreading of syphilis will prove the more lethal.

“May thy lips rot off!” says Phrynia.

“I will *not* kiss thee,” counters Timon. “Thus the rot returns to *thine own* lips again!”

Alcibiades stares at the sunburned lord, whose dark hair and beard are unkempt, whose retorts are petulant. “How came the noble Timon to *this* change?”

“As the *moon* does: by lacking light to give; but *I* could not *renew* like the moon—there were no *suns* to borrow from!”

“Noble Timon, what friendship may I do thee?”

“None but to support my *opinion*.”

“What is it, Timon?”

“*Promise* me friendship, but *perform none!* If thou wilt *promise*, may the gods plague thee, for thou art *a man!*—and if thou dost not *perform*, confound thee, for thou art *a man!*”

While Alcibiades was assembling his ranks of Athens’ disaffected soldiers, several of his officers commented on Lord Timon’s fall. “I have heard in some sort of thy miseries....”

“Thou saw’st *them*”—his real afflictions—“when I had *prosperity!*”

Alcibiades shakes his head. “I see them *now*; *then* was a blessèd time.”

Timon scoffs: “As *thine* is now?—held with a brace of *harlots!*”

The older woman is scornful. “Is *this* the Athenian *minion* whom the world voiced so regardfully?”

“Art thou Timandra?” demands Timon, of the general’s ignominious companion.

“Yes.”



“Be a whore still!” urges Timon. “They love thee not that *use* thee; give them who leave their *lust* with thee *diseases!* Make *use* of thy salt hours: *season* the slaves for tubs and baths; bring down rose-cheeked youth to the tub-hold and the diet!”—treatments for venereal ailments.

She is disgusted. “*Hang* thee, monster!”

Alcibiades would soothe her. “Pardon him, sweet Timandra, for his wits are drownèd and lost in his calamities!

“I have but little gold of late, brave Timon—the want whereof doth daily make revolt in my penurious band. I have heard, and grieved at, how cursèd Athens—mindless of thy worth, forgetting thy great *deeds* when neighbour states, but for thy sword and fortune, has trod upon them—”

Timon cuts him off: “I prithee, beat thy drum, and get thee gone!”

“I am thy friend, and pity thee, dear Timon.”

“How dost thou *pity* him whom thou dost *trouble?* I had rather be *alone.*”

“Then fare thee well.” Alcibiades opens a leather pouch. “Here is some gold for thee.”

“Keep it; I cannot *eat* it.”

The general nods, understanding. “When I have laid proud Athens on a heap—”

“*Warrest* thou ’gainst *Athens?*”

“Aye, Timon—and I have *cause!*”

“The gods *confound* them all in thy conquest!” cries Timon. “And *thee* after, when thou hast conquerèd.”

“Why *me*, Timon?” asks Alcibiades, still proffering the money.

“Because by thy killing of *villains*, thou wast *born* to conquer *my country.*” He is surprised to feel even a twinge; but he proceeds. “Put up *thy* gold.” He pulls the general over to the heap of coins. “Go on!—here’s *gold!*—go *on!* Be a *planetary plague*, as when Jove will o’er some highly vicèd city hang his poison in the sick air!

“Let not thy sword skip *one!*”

“Pity not honoured *age* for his white beard; he is an *usurer!*”

“Strike the counterfeit *matron*—it is her apparel only that is honest; *herself’s* a *bawd!*”

“Let not the *virgin’s* cheek make soft thy trenchant sword; for those milk-paps that through the *window*”—translucent cloth—“*bore into men’s eyes* are not within the leaf of *Pity* writ—except when set down as *horrible traitors!*”

“Spare not the *baby*, whose dimpled smiles from *fools* extract *their* mercy!—think it a *bastard*, of whom the oracle hath dreadfully pronouncèd *the throat shall be cut!*—and *mince* it sans remorse!

“*Swear* against objection! Put *armour* on thine ears and on thine eyes of such strength that not the yells of mothers, maids nor babes, nor sight of *priests* in *holy vestments* bleeding shall pierce a jot!”

He points to the coins. “There’s gold to pay *soldiers!* Make *large confusion!*—then, thy fury spent, confounded be *thyself!*”

“*Speak* not—*be gone!*”

Alcibiades searches his old friend’s troubled face: they have often conferred before battle, and always discussed an armed enemy, never the innocent victims of conflict, concern for whom could slow a soldier’s sword. Yet those are clearly on Timon’s mind now....

Still, the commander can accept good fortune; he pulls the leather purse from his waist. “Hast thou gold *yet?* I’ll take the gold thou givest me—none of thy *counsel.*” He gathers it up.

Timon watches, sullen now, feeling a bit sheepish before his friend. “Dost thou or dost thou not, heaven’s curse upon thee,” he mutters.

Phrynia and Timandra stare at the glittering wealth. “Give *us* some gold, good Timon! Hast thou more?”

He nods, reaching into a pocket. “Enough to make a whore *forswear* her trade, and to *make* whores!” He shows a fistful of gold: “*A bawd!* Hold up, you sluts, your aprons *mountant!*”

“You are not oathable,”—honest enough to depose, “although I know you’ll *swear—terribly* swear the immortal gods that *hear* you unto strong *shudders* and to heavenly *agues!*”

“Spare your oaths,” he tells them, raising a hand for silence. He regards the voluptuousness that promises the gruesome result he wants for men. “I’ll trust to your *conditions.*”

He tosses money into their lifted skirts. “*Be* whores *ever!*—and he whose pious breath seeks to *convert* you, allure *him!*—be *strong* in whoring!—*burn him up!* Let your enclosed fire predominate his smoke, and be no turncoats!

“And yet may *your* pains in six months be quite *contrary*, and thatch your poor, thin roofs”—heads left balding by syphilis—“with burthens of the *dead*, some that were *hanged!*”—with periwigs made of hair from corpses. “No matter!—*wear* them, *betray* with them! *Whore* still!—*paint* till a horse may *mire* upon your *face!*—a pox on *wrinkles!*”

“Well,” nods Timandra, utterly undaunted. “More *gold!*” The women caress their coins. “What *then?*—believe’t that we’ll do *anything* for gold!”

Timon flings more to them—with further encouragement to spread sickness. “*Consumption* sow in the hollow bones of men!—strike their sharp shins, and mar men’s *spurring!*”

“Crack the *lawyer’s* voice, that he may never more false title plead, nor sound his quilllets shrill!

“Whore the *cleric* who scolds against the propensity of flesh—and believes it not himself!

“*Down with the nose!*”—which syphilis withers, “down with it *flat!* Take the *bridge* quite away from him that, *foreseeing* in his particular indulgence, snuffs at the *general weal!*”

“Make curled-pate ruffians *bald*, and let the *unscarrèd braggarts* of the war derive some pain from *you!*”

“Plague *all*, so that your activity may *defeat* and quell the *source* of all erection!

“There’s *more* gold! Do you damn *others*—and let *this* damn *you!*”

“And *ditches* be grave to you all!”

Phrynia urges him on: “More *counsel* with more *money*, bounteous Timon!”

But he, anger spent, for now, is done with them. “More *whoring*, more *mischief* first! I have given you an earnest”—initial payment.

Alcibiades has gathered up enough gold to fill his pouch, and he signals to his lieutenants.

“Strike up the drum! Towards *Athens!*”

“Farewell, Timon! If I thrive well, I’ll visit thee again.”

Timon scowls. “If I *hope* well, I’ll never see thee more.”

“I never did thee harm,” notes Alcibiades gently.

“*Yes,*” counters Timon, “thou spokest *well* of me.”

“Call’st thou that harm?”

“Men daily find it so! Get thee away, and take thy beagles with thee.”

Alcibiades turns to go. “We but offend him,” he tells the women. He calls to the drummer: “Strike!”

Many of the soldiers spurned by Athens march grimly forward to collect—violently—what has for too long been owed to them.

**B**linking in the sunlight after glum rumination inside the nearly dark cave, Timon has emerged from his damp shelter beside the bay. Setting out more coins, he is surprised at his appetite this morning. *That nature, being sick with man’s unkindness, should still be hungry!*

He grasps the spade’s rough handle, bleached gray by salt water. In the shortening shadow of the hill above, he begins again to dig in the sandy earth.

*Common mother, thou, whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast teem and feed all, ...* He throws aside a shovelful of soil. *...whose self-same mantle whereof thy proud child, arrogant Man, is puffed engenders the black toad and adder blue, the gilded newt and eyeless, venomed worm, ...* More dirt is flung. *...with all the abhorred births below crisp heaven whereon*

*Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine, ... He spits in frustration. ...yield to him who all thy human sons doth hate, from forth thy plenteous bosom, one poor root!*

*Then sear thy fertile and conceptious womb!—let it no more bring out ingrateful Man! Go great —be pregnant— with tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears; teem with new monsters, whom thine upward face hath to the marbled mansion all above never presented!*

He finally finds sustenance. *Oh, a root!—dear thanks!* He rinses it in brine, and cuts it into pieces. He drinks spring water from a dented tin cup—another prized gift from the ancient cave.

*Dry up thy marrows, vines and plough-torn leaves, whereof ungrateful Man, with liquorish draughts and morsels unctuous, greases his pure mind such that from it all consideration slips!*

He sees a lone figure plodding up the strand toward him. *More of Man? Plague, plague!*

“I was directed hither,” Apemantus tells him—abrupt as always, and wasting no time with greeting. Yesterday in the city he heard the common talk of Timon’s fury, and of his diatribes against humanity. “Men report thou dost affect *my* manners—and dost *abuse* them!”

Timon glowers. “’Tis only because thou dost not keep a *dog*—whom I’d *wish* to imitate! *Consumption* catch thee!”

Apemantus looks around, annoyed. “This is in *thee* a nature but *affected*—a poor, *unmanly* melancholy sprung from change of fortune! Why this spade?—this place?—this slave-like attire, and these *looks* of care?

“Thy flatterers yet wear *silk*, drink *wine*, lie *soft*—hug their diseased *perfumèds*, and have forgotten that Timon ever was!

“Shame not these *woods* by putting on the cunning of a *carpenter!*—be *thou* a flatterer now, and seek to thrive by that which has undone thee!” He savors the nobleman’s expected humiliation, and evokes very rude images: “*Hinge* thy knee, and let his very breath whom thou’lt serve blow *off the top of thy cap!*—praise his most *vicious stain*, and call it excellent!

“Thou wast *told* thus,” Apemantus points out. “Thou gavest thine ears like *tapsters*’, that bid *welcome* to approachers, *knaves and all!* ’Tis most *just* that thou turn rascal: hadst *thou* wealth again, a *rascal* would have’t!”

Apemantus comes to the gravamen of his complaint: “*Do not assume my likeness!*”

Timon, still digging, sneers. “Were I like *thee*, I’d *throw away* myself!”

“Thou *hast* cast away thyself, being *like* thyself—a madman so long, now a *fool!*”

“What think’st?—that the bleak *air*, *thy* boisterous chamberlain, will put thy shirt on *warmed?* Will these mossèd *trees*, that have outlived the eagle, *page* at thy heels, and *skip* to where thou point’st out? Will the cold *brook*, candied with ice, caudle thy morning toast to cure thine o’er-night’s surfeit?

“Call the creatures who *naked* live in all the spite of wreakful heaven, whose unhoused trunks to the conflicting elements are exposed, answering mere Nature!—bid *them* flatter thee!

“Oh, thou shalt find—”

“—a *fool* in *thee!* *Depart!*” demands Timon, waving him away.

Apemantus grins; he approves truculence. “I love thee better now than e’er I did.”

“I hate thee worse!”

“Why?”

“Thou flatter’st *misery.*”

“*I flatter not!*—I say thou art a *caitiff!*”

“Why dost thou seek me out?”

“To *vex* thee!”

Timon stops digging to lean against the spade handle. He shakes his head. “Always a *villain’s* office, or a fool’s. Dost *please thyself* in’t?”

“Aye!”

“*What?*—a *knave*, too!”—a *jack-off.*

Apemantus eyes him narrowly. "If thou didst *put on* this sour, cold habit to castigate thy *pride*, 'twere well. But thou dost it *enforcedly!*—thou wouldst be a *courtier* again, wert thou not beggarèd!

"*Willing* misery outlives incertain pomp—is crownèd *before!*" he boasts. "The one"—a genuine cynic—"is ever *filling*, never *complete*. The other,"—the impostor, "in *best* state discontented with his *wish*, hath a distracted and most wretched bearing; then, *worse* than the *worst*,"—he pauses to scathe with his greatest insult: "is *content!*"

"Thou *shouldst* desire to *die*, being 'miserable!'"

Timon scowls. "Not by *his* breath who is *more* miserable! Thou art a *slave*, whom Fortune's arm with tender favour never clasped, but was *bred* a *dog!*"

"Hadst thou, like *us* from our first swath, proceeded in the sweet degrees that this brief world affords to such as may the passive drugs of it"—leisure and privilege—"freely command, *thou* wouldst have plunged thyself in *general riot!*—*melted down* thy youth in different beds of *lust!*—and never learned the icy precepts of *respect*, but followed the sugared game"—chased sweet temptations—"before thee!"

"But *myself*, who had the *world* as my confectionery, who had at duty the mouths, the tongues, the eyes and hearts of more men than I could frame *employment* for, which *numberless* upon me stuck as leaves do on the oak—but have, with one winter's brushing, fallen from their boughs and left me *bare*, open to every storm that blows!—for *me* to bear this, who never knew but *better*, is some *burden!*"

"*Thy* nature did *commence* in sufferance; time hath made thee *hard* in't. Why shouldst *thou* hate men?—they never flattered *thee!* What hast thou *given?* If thou wilt *curse*, thy *father*, that poor rag, must be thy topic—he who, for *spite*, put stuff to"—impregnated—"some *she-beggar* and compounded *thee*, poor *rogue hereditary!*"

"*Hence!*—be *gone!* If thou hadst not been *born* the worst of men, thou hadst *become* a knave and *flatterer!*"

Apemantus is unimpressed; he has only contempt for the patrician's voluntary exile. "Art thou *still* proud?"

"Aye—that I am not *thee!*"

"And *I*—that I was no *prodigal!*"

"*Ay!*" cries Timon, scowling, "that I *am* one *now!*"—squandering time on such conversation. "Were all the wealth I have *locked up* in thee, I'd give thee leave to *hang!* Get thee *gone!*"

"If the whole *life* of Athens were in *this*," he says, grabbing a chunk of root, "*thus* would I *eat it!*" he says—biting down fiercely.

Apemantus offers him a piece of fruit from a pocket of his threadbare coat. "Here; I will mend thy feast."

"First mend my *company*: take away *thyself!*"

"So I shall mend mine *own*: by the lack of *thine!*"

"'Tis not *well* mended so!—it is but *botched!* If not, I would that it *were!*"

Apemantus knows he will be questioned in town about the hostile hermit. "What wouldst thou have go to Athens?"

"*Thee!*—thither in a *whirlwind!* If thou wilt, tell them there that *I have gold!* Look, so I have!" He shows the new pile of coins—ready to be dispersed as hard malignity.

Apemantus's hand sweeps up toward the wooded hillsides. "Here is no *use* for gold."

"The best and *truest*," argues Timon, "for here it *sleeps*, and does no hired harm."

Apemantus looks down at the soft, brown, apple-like medlar, edible only when it's pulpy, nearly spoiled. "Where liest o' nights, Timon?" he asks quietly.

"Under what's above me. Where feed'st thou *these* days, Apemantus?"

"Where my stomach finds meat—or, rather, where *I'll eat it.*"

"I would that *poison* were obedient and knew my mind...."

"Where wouldst thou send it?"

“To sauce thy dishes!”

Apemantus only laughs. “The *middle* of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends! When thou wast in thy guilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for *too much*; in thy rags thou knowest *none*, and art despised for the *contrary*!”

“There’s a medlar for thee; eat it.”

Timon rejects everything sweet. “On what I hate I feed not.”

“Dost hate a *medlar*?”

“Aye—for it *looks* like *thee*!”—brown and shriveled.

“If thou hadst hated *meddlers* sooner, thou shouldst have loved *thyself* better now!”

Apemantus regards the neophyte pauper. “What *unthrifty* man didst thou ever know who was beloved *after* his means?”—once he became destitute.

Demands Timon, “Who *without* those means thou talkest of didst *thou* ever know beloved?”

“Myself.”

Now Timon laughs. “I understand thee; thou hadst *some* means: *to keep a dog*!”—bones.

Apemantus snorts. “What things in the world canst thou nearest compare to *thy flatterers*?”—*sons of bitches*, in his view.

“Women *nearest*; but men—men are *things* themselves!”—*thing* is a term for *prick*. Timon thinks of the gold he’s dispersed. “What wouldst *thou* do with the world, Apemantus, if it lay in thy power?”

“Give it to the *beasts*, to be rid of the *men*.”

“Wouldst thou have *thyself* fall, in the confounding of men, and remain as a *beast* with the beasts?”

“Aye, Timon.”

“A beastly ambition!—may the gods grant thee to *attain* it!

“If thou wert a *lion*, the fox would *beguile* thee; if thou wert a *lamb*, the fox would *eat* thee!”

“If thou wert a *fox*, the lion would *suspect* thee when peradventure thou wert accused by an ass; if thou wert the *ass*, thy dullness would ever torment thee—and thou’d live but as a breakfast for the *wolf*!”

“If thou wert a wolf, thy *greediness* would afflict thee, and oft thou shouldst *hazard thy life* for thy *dinner*!”

“Wert thou a *bear*, thou wouldst be kicked by the horse; wert thou a *horse*, thou wouldst be seized by the leopard; wert thou a *leopard*, thou wert related to the lion—and the *spots* from thy parentage were jurors on thy *life*!”—would reveal bastardy. “All *thy* safety were *remotion*, and thy defence *absence*!”

“Wert thou a *unicorn*, pride and wrath would confound thee, and make thine own *self* the conquest of thy *fury*!” Self. He pauses, and looks down, thinking.

Timon sees Apemantus smiling. “What beast couldst thou be that were not *subject* to a beast?—and what a beast art thou *already*, that seest not thy loss in any transformation!”

Apemantus chuckles. “If thou *couldst* please me with speaking to me, thou mightst have hit upon it *there*! The commonwealth of Athens *is* become a ‘forest of beasts!’”

“What?—has the ass *broken the wall*, that *thou* art out of the city?”

Apemantus knows of two other Athenians who plan to come down to visit Timon. “Yonder come a poet and a painter!” he says gleefully. “The plague of *company* lights upon thee! I will fear to *catch* it, and give way!” He moves back along the sand, toward the road to town. “When I know not what *else* to do, I’ll see *thee* again.”

“When there is nothing *living* but thee, thou shalt be welcome! I had rather be a *beggar’s dog* than Apemantus!”

“Thou art the *cap* of *all the fools* alive!”

“I would thou wert *clean* enough to *spit* upon!”

“A plague on thee—thou art *too bad* to *curse*!”

“All *villains* that do stand near *thee* look *pure*!”

“There is no *leprosy* but what *thou speak'st!*”

“—if I name *thee!*” counters Timon. “I'd *beat* thee—but I should *infect* my *hands!*”

“I would my *tongue* could *rot them off!*” retorts Apemantus.

“*Away*, thou issue of a mangy dog! *Choler* does kill me that thou art *alive!* I swoond at *seeing* thee!”

“Would thou wouldst *burst!*”

“*I*, thou tedious rogue?—I am sorry that I shall lose a *stone* by thee!” he shouts, picking up a rock.

“Beast!”

“Slave!”

“*Toad!*”

“Rogue, rogue, *rogue!*” Turning away, Timon groans. “I am sick of this false world!—and will love nought but even the mere necessities upon't!”

Apemantus challenges: “Then, Timon, immediately prepare thy *grave*. Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat thy grave-stone daily. Make thine *epitaph*.”

Timon smiles. “So that in death I may laugh at others' lives!” He drops the stone, takes gold from his pocket, and looks at it. “O thou sweet *king-killer*, and costly divorce 'twixt natural son and sire! Thou bright *defiler* of Hymen's purest bed! Thou valiant *Mars!* Thou ever-young, fresh, lovèd and delicate *wooer*, whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow that lies on Dian's lap!”—arouse virgins. “Thou visible *god*, that solder'st near impossibilities, and makest them *kiss!*—that speak'st with every tongue, to every purpose!”

He beseeches the gold: “O thou toucher of hearts, think of thy slaves, men, as *rebels!*—and by thy virtue, set them into *confounding odds!*”—destructive opposition, “so that *beasts* may have the world in empire!”

“Would 'twere so!” says Apemantus—adding, “but not till I am dead.” Aware of having been bested in denunciation, he has a reprisal: “I'll *say* thou hast gold!—thou wilt be *thronged to* shortly!”

“Thronged to!” The recluse has second thoughts.

“Aye!”

“Thy *back*, I prithee!”

Apemantus laughs. “*Live*, and love thy *misery!*”

Timon returns the malediction: “*Long* live so—and so *die!*” He grabs the spade and begins digging, furiously heaving sand from a long, deepening hole—to be a grave.

“I am quit,” murmurs Apemantus. He glances at the wet rods of root. *More things like men!*

He bites into the soft medlar. *Eat, Timon—and abhor them!* He plods back to Athens.

## Chapter Seven Visitors

While Alcibiades has been engaged in equipping his newly amassed army, and in readying the men for the assault on Athens, his mistresses have spent some of their sudden wealth—and have told how they got it. Word of Timon's loathsome new largesse has traveled quickly in Athens and its environs—even to some who skulk in the hills above Timon's cave.

The chief of one such band doubts that Timon has much to steal. “Wherefore should he have this gold?” he demands, as he and his fellows come down warily among the trees. “It is some poor fragment, some slender part of his remainder; the sheer *want* of gold, and the falling-from of his friends, drove him into this melancholy.”

Reaching the shore, they start along the sand toward the would-be hermit.

“It is noised he hath a mass of *treasure!*” insists his second in command, a wizened graybeard.

“Let us make the assay upon him!” says a former corporal. “If he *care* not for’t, he will supply us easily!” But then he wonders: “If he covetously *reserve* it, how shall ’s get it?”

“True,” nods the ancient, “for he bears it not about him; ’tis *hid!*”

The leader spots Timon ahead, digging in the sand. “Is not this he?”

“Where?” Trying clumsily to exercise stealth, the others tramp along behind him.

“’Tis his description,” says the old one.

“He,” the corporal confirms. “I know him.”

Timon hears them stumbling through the brush. He presses the blade of his shovel into the soil with a foot, and, leaning on the handle, stares defiantly at the three rogues.

Knives drawn, the renegades approach. “Save thee, Timon,” says their chief, bowing watchfully.

Timon greets them dryly. “Now, thieves.”

“*Soldiers*, not thieves!” says the old man fiercely.

“*Both!*—and *women’s sons*, too!” growls Timon.

“We are not thieves, but men that much do *want!*”—*need*, argues the corporal.

Timon scoffs. “Your *greatest want*”—deficiency—“is that you want much of *meat!*”—lack masculinity. “Why should you do without?” He gestures grandly up toward the forest. “Behold, the earth hath *roots*; within this mile break forth a hundred *springs*; the oaks bear mast,”—their fruit, acorns, which can be fed to swine, “the briars scarlet hips!”—berries. “The bounteous housewife *Nature* on each bush lays her full supper before you!

“Want! Why *want?*”

“We cannot live on *grass*, on berries and water, as beasts and birds and fishes!” protests the chief.

Timon responds angrily: “Nor on the beasts, birds and fishes *themselves*—*you* must eat *men!*”

“Yet *thanks!* I must acknowledge that you are thieves *professèd*—that you work not in holier *shapes*; for there is *boundless* theft in *limited* professions”—the licensed ones, deemed honorable.

“Rascal thieves, here’s *gold!*” He leads them to the new pile he has set outside. “Go, suck the subtle blood o’ the *grape* till the high fever *seethe your blood to froth!*—and so ’scape *hanging!*”

“Trust not the physician,” Timon advises. “His antidotes are *poison*, and he *slays* more than you *rob!*”

“Take wealth and *lives* together! Do *villainy!* Do it—since you profess to do’t—*like workmen!*”

He paces, ire rising. “I’ll *example* you with *thievery!*”

“The *sun’s* a thief, and with his great attraction robs the vast sea! The *moon’s* an arrant thief, and her pale fire she snatches from the sun! The *sea’s* a thief, whose liquid surge dissolves women into salt tears!”—those of sailors’ widows. “The *earth’s* a thief, that feeds and breeds by a composture stolen from general *excrement!*”

“*Each thing’s* a thief!” he cries, approaching a frenzy. “The *laws*—your curb and whip!—hold in their rough power *unchecked theft!*”

“Love not *yourselves!*—*away!*—rob *one another!*” The varlets edge back from him as he rages. “There’s *more gold!* *Cut throats!*—all that you *meet* are *thieves!*”

He urges them on, hotly, to augment Alcibiades’ fight against the city. “To *Athens* go; *break open shops!* Nothing can you steal but *thieves* do lose it! Steal no *less* because of this I *give* you!—and gold *confound* you howsoe’er!

“*Amen!*”

The newest bandit, a red-complexioned corporal, is taken aback by the tirade. “He has almost charmed me *from* my profession, by persuading me *to* it!”

“’Tis in a malice for mankind that he thus advises us,” warns the leader, “not to have *us* thrive in our mystery!”—their craft.

But the tired old man, his knife already sheathed, finds Timon's fury credible. "I'll believe *him*—as an *enemy*—and give up my trade!"

The wary chief, a former lieutenant, wants to wait. "Let us first see peace in Athens. There is no time so miserable but that a man may be *true*."

The *banditti*, however shaken, gather up the loose gold and steal away—not to their lair in the upper woods, but to Athens, where, like proper soldiers, they soon will squander it all.

Flavius has found Timon, and stands on the hot sand, holding a bag of clothes, and watching from a distance as his fallen master digs a grave.

*O you gods! Is yond despisèd and ruinous man my lord?—full of decay, and failing! Oh, monument of wonder to good deeds evilly bestowèd! What an alteration of honour has desperate want made! What viler thing upon the earth than friends who can bring noblest minds to basest ends!*

*How rarely does it meet with this time's guise, when man was wishèd to love his enemies! Grant that I may ever love, and rather woo, those that would mischief me than those that do!*

The steward walks toward Timon. *He has caught me in his eye! I will present my honest grief unto him—and still serve him, as my lord, with my life!* "My dearest master!"

Timon regards him with annoyance. "Away! What art thou?"

"Have you forgot me, sir?"

Timon resumes shoveling. "Why dost ask that? I have forgotten *all* men; then if thou grant'st thou'rt a *man*, I have forgotten *thee*."

Flavius sets down the bag, and holds his hat in his hands. "An honest poor servant of yours."

"Then I know thee not! I never had *honest* men about me; all I kept were *knaves*, serving up meat to *villains!*"

"As the gods are witness," says Flavius, softly, "ne'er did poor steward wear a truer grief for his undone lord than mine eyes for you."

Timon stops to look—and suddenly is quite touched. "What, dost thou weep? Come nearer," he says gently. This man's *bona fide* affection moves the misanthrope, his general anger notwithstanding. *Then I'll love thee because thou art a woman, and disclaim'st flinty mankind—whose eyes do never give but through lust and laughter!*

He reflects: *Pity's sleeping; strange times, that weep with laughing, not with weeping.*

Says Flavius, "I beg of you to *know* me, good my lord—to accept my grief." He offers his leather purse. "And whilst this poor wealth lasts, to employ me as your steward still."

The nobleman is stunned. *Had I a steward so true, so just?—and now so comforting! It almost turns my dangerous nature mild....* "Let me behold thy face." Timon smiles. "Surely," he says dryly, "*this man was born of woman!*"

He looks up. *Forgive my general and exceptionless rashness, you perpetually sober gods. I do proclaim one honest man! Mistake me not, I pray!—but one!—no more. And he's a steward! The jest is in irony: it's commonly thought that every steward pilfers.*

Timon's "one" was deliberate; he is starting to facing his failings. Aware now of his own tears, he says, in mock complaint, "How fain would I have hated *all* mankind—and thou *redeem'st* thyself!

"All but save *thee* I'd fell with curses!

"Methinks thou art more honest now than *wise!*—for, by oppressing and betraying me, thou mightst have sooner got another service"—obtained a new position. "Many so arrive at second masters—upon their first lord's *neck!*

"But tell me true—for I must ever question, though ne'er so sure: is not thy kindness *subtle, covetous*—a *usuring* kindness?—and as *rich* men deal in 'gifts,' expecting in return *twenty* for one."



“No, my most worthy master!—in whose breast ‘doubt’ and ‘suspect,’ *alas*, are placèd *too late!* You should have fearèd ‘*false*’ in times when you did feast! Suspicion ever comes when an estate is least!

“That which I show, heaven knows, is merely love—zeal and duty to your unmatched mind, care for your food and living! And believe it, my most honoured lord, any benefit that points to me, either in hope or at present, I’d exchange for *this one wish*: that you had power and wealth to requite me by making rich *your self*.”

Timon startles the steward by laughing—happily. “*Look, then—’tis so!*” He gently takes Flavius by the arm and leads him to the flat rock on which the heap of glistening coins has again been replenished.

“Thou *singly* honest man—here, *take!* The gods, from out of *my* misery, have sent thee *treasure!* Go, live rich and happy, but thus conditionèd: thou shalt build *away from men!* Hate *all, curse* all, show charity to *none!*—and let the famished flesh slide from the bone ere thou relieve a *beggar!* Give to *dogs* what thou deny’st to *men!*—let *prisons* swallow ’em, *debts* wither ’em to *nothing!*

“Be men like *blasted wounds*, and may *diseases* lick up their false bloods!

“And so, fare well and thrive.”

As Flavius stares, Timon walks along the narrow border between sea and land, now warm with sunshine, and returns to digging his hole.

“Oh, let me stay, and comfort you, my master!”

Timon looks up from within the deepening oblong. “If thou hatest *curses*, stay not!—fly, whilst thou art blest and free! Ne’er see thou *Man*—and let *me* ne’er see *thee!*”

Flavius silently stows the unexpected bounty, soon to be shared with his fellow servants, in his thin, worn purse. He walks, forlorn, back to the city.

Timon watches, knowing that, for the first time, his instructions will be ignored.

Only after the good man is long out of sight does he return to digging.

---

Hearing voices this evening, Timon, resting at the edge of the pit, gets up and moves away quickly, ducking behind the concealing undergrowth.

The poet and the painter, accustomed to pavement, tread awkwardly in the softer sand.

The younger man looks back to the road, then up and down the coast. “As I took note of the place, it cannot be far, where he abides.”

The painter ponders. “What’s to be thought of him? Does the rumour hold for *true* that he’s so full of gold?”

“Certain! Alcibiades reports it; Phrynia and Timandra had gold of him; he likewise enrichèd poor straggling soldiers with great quantity! ’Tis said he gave unto his steward a *mighty* sum!”

“Then this *breaking* of his *has* been but a test of his friends.”

“Nothing else!” says the poet, as they approach the cave; Timon can already hear them. “You shall see him a *palm* in Athens again, and flourishing with the *highest!* Therefore ’tis not amiss we tender our loves to him, in this *supposèd* distress of his! It will show as honesty in us—and is very likely to load our purposes with what they travail for,”—money, “if it be a just, true report that goes, about his having.”

“What have you now to present unto him?”

“Nothing at this time but my visitation; I will only *promise* him an excellent piece.”

“I must serve him so, too—tell him of an *intent* that’s coming toward him.”

“*Good!*—as the best promising is the very *air o’ the times*; it opens the eyes of *expectation!*” says the poet.

The painter nods. “Performance is ever the duller in its act. Even in the plainer and simpler kind of people, the deed of *saying* is quite out of use; *promising* is more courtly and fashionable. Performance is a kind of *will* or *testament*—which implies a great *sickness* in the judgment of he who makes it.”

- Timon moves nearer, unobserved, behind them. *Excellent workman, thou canst not paint a man so bad as is thy self!*

The poet frowns. "I am thinking what I shall *say* I have provided for him. It must be a personating of *himself*—a satire against the softness of *prosperity*, with exposition of the infinite flatteries that follow after wealth and opulency."

- *Thou must needs pose for the villain in thine own work!*

*Wilt thou whip thine own faults in other men? Do so!—I have gold for thee!*

The two are nearing the cave. "Aye, let's seek him!" says the poet. He rhymes: "'Then do we sin against our own estate, When we may profit meet, but come too late!'"

"True. 'When day yet serves, before black-cornered night, Find what thou want'st, by the free and offered light.' Come."

Timon draws back. *I'll meet you at the turn.* Hidden by the brush, he dashes silently toward his cavern. *What a god is gold, that he is worshipped in a baser temple than where swine feed!*

*'Tis thou that rigg'st the ship, and plough'st the foam, settlest admirèd reverence in a slave! To thee be worship!—and may thy saints who thee alone obey forever be crownèd with plagues!*

*'Tis fit I meet them!* Timon has use for such men. He emerges slowly from the tall bushes, as if unaware of the visitors.

The poet greets him warmly: "*Hail, worthy Timon!*"

"Our late noble master," says the painter.

Timon sounds delighted: "Have I lived to see two honest men at once?"

The poet bows. "Sir, having often of your open bounty tasted, hearing you were retirèd, your friends fall'n off, whose thankless natures—" He sighs. "Oh, *abhorrèd* spirits!—not all the whips of *heaven* are large enough! *What?*—to *you*, whose star-like nobleness gave life and influence to their whole *being!* I am rapt, and cannot cover the monstrous bulk of this *ingratitude* with any size of *words!*"

"Let it go naked; *men* may see't the better," says Timon. "And as you are honest, make *them* best seen and known by being what *you* are."

"He and myself have travailed in the great shower of your gifts," says the painter, "and sweetly felt it."

"Aye; you are honest *men.*"

The painter bows. "We are hither come to offer you our service."

"*Most* honest men!" says Timon. But he looks around at the barren shore. "Why, how shall I requite you? Can you eat *roots*, and drink cold *water?*" He sees their expressions. "No...?"

"What we *can* do, we'll do, to do *you* service," promises the painter.

"Ye're *honest* men... ye've heard that I have gold—I am sure you have. Speak truth; ye're honest *men*..."

The two exchange glances. The painter shrugs. "So it is said, my noble lord; but *therefore* came not my friend nor I."

Timon smiles. "Good honest *men!* Thou draw'st the counterfeit"—likeness—"best in all Athens! *Thou* art, indeed, *the best!*—thou *counterfeit'st* most *lively!*"

The artist—taking that as praise for skill in representing with paint—is pleased. "So-so, my lord," he says modestly.

"E'en so, sir, as I *say!*" Timon turns to the writer. "And as for thy *fiction*—why, thy verse swells with stuff so fine and smooth that thou art even *natural* in thine art!" The pompous poet, flattered to be thought faithful to nature, misses Timon's gibe: a *natural* is a person so ignorant and slow as to act stupidly.

Timon regards them. "But, for all this, my *honest*-natured friends, I must needs say you have a little *fault!* Marry, 'tis not *monstrous* in you; neither wish I that you take much pains to *mend*..."

The poet is eager to please. "Beseech Your Honour to make it known to us!"

Timon holds back. "You'll take it ill..."

“Most *thankfully*, my lord,” the painter assures him.

“Will you indeed?”

“Doubt it not, worthy lord!”

Timon leans closer and reveals, “There’s neither one of you but trusts a *knave* that mightily *deceives* you!”

Both are fascinated. “*Do* we, my lord?”

“Aye! And you *hear* him cog, *see* him dissemble, *know* his gross patchery—yet love him, feed him, keep in your bosom! Remain assured, he’s *made up of villainy!*”

The painter is nonplussed. “I know none such, my lord.”

The poet’s brow wrinkles as he thinks. “Nor I.”

But Timon seems to be quite concerned. “Look you, I love you *well*; I’ll give you *gold* to drive these villains from your companies!—*hang* them, or *stab* them, *drown* them in a draught, *confound* them by some course! Then come to me—I’ll give you gold enough!”

“*Name* them, my lord,” says the artist.

“Let us know them!” cries the poet.

Timon points from one to the other and back. “*You* that way, and you *this!*”

“*Two*, when accompanied—but each man *apart*, all single and alone, an *arch-villain* always keeps him company!” he explains gruffly. “If where thou art, two villains shall *not* be, come not near *him!*” he warns the painter. “If thou wouldst not reside but where *one* villain is, then him abandon!” he tells the poet.

“*Hence!*” he orders, pulling them toward the pile of coins. “*Pack!* There’s *gold!* You *came* for gold, ye *slaves!* You have *worked* for me!—there’s payment for you!”

As they hurriedly scrape up the coins, he cries, “*Hence!*” He spits at the painter. “You are an *alchemist*,” he says with fierce sarcasm, “make gold of *that!*”

“*Out, rascal dogs!*”

Swinging the spade menacingly, he drives them away with the blade of honest iron, each man still clutching at yet-unpocketed pieces of precious metal as they scramble away, kicking up sand.

## Chapter Eight Coming to Terms

Two senators have prevailed upon Flavius to guide them from Athens to his former master. As their city becomes aware that it will soon come under attack by Alcibiades’ troops, civil order has deteriorated into dissension and fear. Lord Timon, as a well known community beacon, a former army commander—and the wrathful general’s friend—could be of help.

“It is in vain that you would speak with Timon,” Flavius warns them, as they near his retreat, “for he is set so only to himself that nothing *but* himself which looks like *man* is friendly with him.”

“Bring us to his cave,” grumbles the rotund statesman, puffing with the unaccustomed effort. “It is our part and promise to the Athenians to speak with Timon.”

The other, younger orator is more hopeful. “Men are not at all times alike, ever the same; ’twas time in *griefs* that framed him thus. With its *fairer* hand offering the fortunes of his former days, Time may make him the former *man*. Bring us to him, and chance it as it may.”

Flavius points just ahead. “Here is his cave.” *Peace and content be here!* he silently prays. “*Lord Timon!*” he calls. “Timon, look out, and speak to friends! The Athenians, by two of their most reverend Senate, *greet* thee! *Speak* to them, noble Timon!”

The exile comes out, squinting in the glare. “Thou, sun that comfort’st, *burn them!*”

“Speak, and be hanged!” he tells the lawmakers. “For each *true* word, a *blister!*—and may each *false* one be *cauterizing* to the root o’ the tongue, *consuming* it with the speaking!”

“*Worthy* Timon—” the old senator begins.

“Of none but such as *you*—and you of Timon!” mutters the hermit.

“The senators of Athens greet thee, Timon.”

“I thank them—and would send them back *the plague*, could I but catch it for them!”

“Oh, forgive what we are *sorry* for, *ourselves*, in regard to thee!” pleads the younger nobleman. “With one consent of *love* the senators—who have thought of *special dignities*, which vacant lie for *thy* best use and wearing!—entreat thee back to Athens!”

Says the other lord, “They confess toward thee *forgetfulness* too generally gross. Now the public body, which doth seldom play the *recafter*, feeling in itself the lack of Timon’s *aid*, hath sense withal of its own failing, in restraining aid to *Timon*, and sends forth *us*, to make their sorrow rendered—together with a *recompense* more fruitful than their offence can weigh down by the dram!

“Aye, even such heaps and *sums* of love and *wealth* as shall to thee blot out what wrongs were theirs, and write in thee the *figures* of their love, ever to read them thine!”

Timon seems touched. “You ’witch me in it—surprise me to the very brink of tears!” But then he scowls. “Lend me a *fool’s* heart and a *woman’s* eyes,” he says sourly, “and I’ll *bewEEP* these comforts, *worthy* senators!”

The older lord persists. “If it please thee to return with us, and to *take the captainship* of our Athens—*thine* and ours—there thou shalt be met with *thanks*, allowed with absolute *power*, and in thy *good name* live with *authority*!

“Then soon we shall *drive back* Alcibiades, the approacher wild, who, like a *boar* too *savage*, doth root up his country’s peace!”

Adds the younger man, “And shakes his *threatening sword* against the walls of Athens!”

“Therefore, Timon—”

“Well, sir, *my* will. *Therefore* do I will, sir, *thus*: if Alcibiades kill my countrymen, let Alcibiades know this of Timon—that *Timon cares not*!

“But if he *sack* fair Athens, and take our goodly, aged men by the beards, give our holy virgins to the stain of contumelious, beastly, mad-brained *War*, then let him know—and tell him Timon speaks it!—that, in pity for our aged and our youth, I cannot choose but tell him *I care not*!

“And let him take’t *at worst*!—for their *knives* care not, while *you* have *throats* to answer!

“As for myself, there’s not a *whittle* in this unruly camp but I do prize in my love before the *reverend’s* throat in Athens!

“So I leave you to the protection of thy *prosperous* gods—as *thieves* to *jailers*!” he snarls.

Flavius is loath to aggravate Timon’s anger further. He tells the senators, “Stay not—all’s in vain!”

Timon embraces that sentiment: “Well, I *was* writing my epitaph!—it will be seen tomorrow.

“My long sickness—of *health* and *living*—now begins to mend,” he says, with grim irony, “and *nothing* brings me *all* things.

“Go, live still!—be Alcibiades your *plague*, you *his*—and *last* so *long enough*!”—to the end.

The old man’s shoulders sag, and he turns to go. “We speak in vain.”

“And yet, I love *my country*,” says Timon, “and am not one who rejoices in the ‘*common wrack*,’ as common bruit doth put it.”

The senator pauses, listening. “That’s well spoken....”

Timon paces, hand clasped together behind his back. “Commend me to my *loving* countrymen—”

“These words *become* your lips as they pass thorough them!” says the old man.

“And enter in our ears like great *triumphers*, in their applauding gates!” says the other.

“—commend me to them, and tell them that, to *ease* them of their griefs, their fears of hostile *strokes*, their *aches*, *losses*, their pangs of *love*—with other incident throes that nature’s fragile vessel doth sustain in life’s uncertain voyage—I will some *kindness* do them.

“I’ll teach them to prevent wild Alcibiades’ wrath.”

“I like this well!” cries the fat senator, beaming. “He will return again!”

Timon proceeds. “I have a tree, which grows here in my close, that mine own use invites me to cut down; and shortly must I fell it. Tell my friends, tell all Athens, in the sequence of degree from high to low throughout, that whoso please to *stop affliction*, let him make his haste, come hither ere my tree hath felt the axe—and *hang himself!*”

“I pray *you’ll* do my greeting!”

Flavius urges the stunned men to go. “Trouble him no further; thus you still shall find him.”

“*Come not to me again!*” demands the recluse, “but say to Athens, ‘Timon hath made his everlasting mansion upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood, which once a day with its embossèd froth the turbulent surge shall cover! If thither come, let my *grave-stone* be your *oracle!*”

“Lips, let *forth!*—words, *go by!*—and language, *end!* Whatever is amiss, may *plague* and *infection* mend! *Graves only* be men’s works—and *death* their gain!”

“Sun, hide thy beams; Timon hath done his rain”—shed last tears. With that, he walks away, and returns to the cave.

The senior senator stands dejected. “His discontents are unremoveably coupled to’s nature.”

His companion nods. “Our hope in him is dead; let us return, and strain what other means is left unto us in our dire peril!”

The old man is increasingly alarmed, and he struggles through the sand to carry back the bad news. “It requires swift foot!”

—

Just inside the high walls shielding Athens, a tired scout has been telling townsmen what he learned about the approach of Alcibiades and his discontented army.

“Thou hast *painfully* recounted!” say a city official of the frightful news. “Are his files”—ranks of troops—“as full as thy report?”

“I have spoke the *least!*” the rider tells them. “What’s *more*, his expediting promises immediate approach!”

A legislator peers out through the massive southern gate, opened only a crack, watching for the emissaries they sent to the pariah. “We stand much in hazard if they bring not Timon!” The hope is that Alcibiades’ former ally can be induced to return, and to bargain—or plead—for them.

“I met a *courier*, one mine ancient friend,” the scout tells them. “Though in general part we were opposèd, yet our old love made a particular force, and bade us speak like friends.

“This man was riding from Alcibiades to Timon’s cave, with letters of entreaty which imported his fellowship i’ the cause *against* our city—in part for *his* sake movèd.”

“Here come our brothers!” cries a senator.

The lords who entreated Timon hurry between the tall gate doors, followed by Flavius.

The fat senator wheezes, “No talk of *Timon!*—nothing of him expect! The enemy’s *drum* is heard, and a fearful *swarming* doth choke the air with dust!

“*In*, and *prepare!* Ours is the *fall*, I fear; our foes’—the *snare!*”

—

A horseman reins his lathered mount to an abrupt halt, its hooves sinking in the sand not far from Timon’s cave.

Alcibiades’ courier dismounts quickly, thinking, *By all description this should be the place.*

“Who’s here?” he calls. “Speak, *ho!*”

*No answer!*

*What is this?* He leads the panting horse to a mound near the shore. He finds words scratched onto the flat stone at its head. The illiterate soldier is dismayed. *Dead, surely!—and this his grave!* He pulls off his hat, and stands, silent for a moment, looking at the letters, which begin, *Timon is dead who hath outstretched his span. Some beast read this; there does not live a man.*

The rider considers. *What’s on this tomb I cannot read. The characters I’ll take with wax; our captain hath skill in every figure—an agèd interpreter, though young in days.*

Back at his saddle, he pulls from a leather bag—its written offer to Timon still unopened—a wax-covered tablet and a slender, pointed rod. He kneels to copy the makeshift gravestone's markings, which he will take to Alcibiades.

*Before proud Athens he's set down by now!* The man mounts his steed. *Its fall is the mark of his ambition!*

Eager to take part in that conquest, he soon rides away at a gallop.

Trumpeted warnings are echoing through the city when the general leads his multitude of soldiers right up to the wall outside Athens. "Sound to this *coward* and *lascivious* town our terrible approach!" cries Alcibiades.

At the gates, his herald's horn blares out a demand for a parley. Soon several ashen-faced senators appear on the parapet above; other fearful nobles cluster behind them, along with common citizens.

Alcibiades draws his sword and addresses the lords angrily. "Till *now* you have gone on, and filled the time with all *licentious* measure!" cries the man with two mistresses, "making *your wills* the scope of justice!

"Till *now*, myself and such as slept within the *shadow* of your power have *wandered*—traversed with our arms, and vainly breathed our sufferance.

"*Now* the time is flush when marrow crouching in the bearer cries strongly, of itself, '*No more!*' Now the breathless *wrongèd* shall sit in your great chairs of *ease!*

"Then pant with fear in *horrid flight*, when pury *insolence* shall *break its wind!*"

His men laugh, and roar their approval, shaking their spears and battle-axes, and waving swords above their heads, ready to begin the assault.

The eldest senator moves closer to the edge of the high wall. "Noble and young," he calls down to Alcibiades, "when first thy griefs were but a mere idea—ere thou hadst *power*, or we had *cause* of fear—we *sent* to thee, to give thy rages *balm*—to wipe out our ingratitude with loves above their quantity!"

Adds the younger emissary, "And so did we woo transformèd *Timon* to our city's love, by humble message, and by promisèd means!

"We were not *all* unkind," the Athenian argues, "nor do all deserve the common stroke of war!"

Says the old one, "These walls of ours were not erected by *their* hands from whom you have received your griefs. Nor are *they* such that these great towers, trophies and schools should fall because of private faults in *them!*"

"Nor are those *living* who were the reasons that you first went out!" the younger man tells the general—revealing the lethal depth of the town's internal turmoil. "Shame!—*that* they wanted!"—lacked. "*Cunning in excess* hath broken *their* hearts!

"March, noble lord, into our city with thy banners spread! By *decimation*—*tithèd* death, if thy revenge hungers for that food which Nature loathes—*take* thou the destined tenth, and by the hazard of the spotted die"—throw of the dice—"let die the *spotted!*"—guilty.

"*All* have not offended!" the desperate old senator points out. "It is not square to take revenges on those that *are* for those that *were!*"—men already executed. "Crimes are not, like lands, *inherited!*

"Then, dear countryman, bring in thy ranks, but leave outside thy *rage!* *Spare* thy Athenian cradle, and those kin who in the bluster of thy wrath might fall with those that *have* offended! Like a *shepherd*, approach the fold and cull the *infected* forth, but kill not all together!"

"What thou wilt, thou better shalt enforce it with thy *smile,*" the younger man tells Alcibiades, "than hew to't with thy sword!"

The old man assures the general: "Set but thy *foot* against our ramparted gates, and they shall open!—if thou wilt send thy gentle heart before, to say thou'lt enter *friendly.*"

“Throw thy glove, or any token else of thine honour,” urges the younger man, “that thou wilt use the wars as *thy redress*, and not for *our destruction*, and all thy powers shall make their harbour in our town till we have *sealed* thy full desire!”

Alcibiades, looking up, stares past the lords and sees the faces of the innocents condemned in Timon’s fiery rhetoric. He knows he has already won, and he does not no enjoy seeing the women and children cowering.

“Then there’s my glove,” he says, tossing one to the ground. “Descend, and open your unchargèd ports!

“Those enemies of Timon’s and mine own—whom you *yourselves* shall set out for reproof—fall, and no more.

“And, to atone your fears with my more-noble meaning: not a man shall surpass his quarter,”—take more than housing, “or offend the stream of regular justice in your city’s bounds, but shall be rendered to your public laws at heaviest answer.” His troops will not run riot in Athens.

The senators are visibly relieved and pleased. “’Tis most *nobly* spoken!”

Alcibiades commands them: “Descend, and keep your words!”

Securing bars are lifted free, and soon the massive gates swing open; the senators come forth to welcome the commander and his men home.

As the leaders talk, a courier rides up to stop near Alcibiades. He dismounts, sweeps off his hat, and bows. “My noble general, Timon is dead!—entombèd upon the very hem o’ the sea.” He opens the saddle bag. “And on his grave-stone this insculpture, which with wax I brought away, whose soft impression interpret for my poor ignorance.”

Alcibiades nods and reads.

He speaks the ending aloud. “Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft! Seek not *my name!*”—*Misanthrope*. “A plague consume you caitiffs left!

“Here lie I, Timon, who all living men did hate; pass by and curse thy fill—but *pass*, and slow not here thy gait!”

The general looks up—and smiles, thinking of his friend. “These well express thee in thy latter spirits.

“Though thou abhorr’dst in us our human griefs—scorn’dst our brains’ flow, and those droplets which from our niggard nature fall—yet a rich idea taught thee to make vast *Neptune* weep forever on thy low grave!

“On faults forgiven,” he adds, gently.

He addresses the crowd of citizens and soldiers. “Dead is *noble* Timon!—of whose memory hereafter more.”

Alcibiades ponders for a moment, then faces the lords. “Bring me into your city, and I will use the *olive* with my sword, make war breed *peace!*” He will mediate contraries: “Make peace *stint* war; make each prescribe to the other, and each the other’s leech”—*healer*, although Apemantus would have laughed at the phrasing.

The general sheathes his sword. “Let our *drums* strike!” Athenians will not use their weapons against each other.

---

As the ship, sails billowing, glides out from the river into the blue gulf, its captain glances, briefly, at a sunburned passenger, just recently boarded for the vessel’s return to Sicily. The modest, soft-spoken gentleman has brought but one very heavy bag. He stands still, alone on the deck now, his gaze fixed on the passing shore, below the woods south of Athens.

The old seaman turns back to his duties.

The traveler, watching as the deserted coast drifts past and is slowly left behind, smiles.

He recalls a phrase, “Here *lie I*,” enjoying its duplicity; and he notes with satisfaction that the injunction to stay away is being heeded.

*Seek not my name*, he thinks, satisfied.

Along the sand, the rising tide already laps at the rough stone covering all that remains of noble Timon of Athens.