

PERICLES PRINCE OF TYRE

by William Shakespeare

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANTIOCHUS, king of Antioch.

PERICLES, prince of Tyre.

HELICANUS, ESCANES, two lords of Tyre.

SIMONIDES, king of Pentapolis.

CLEON, governor of Tarsus.

LYSIMACHUS, governor of Mytilene.

CERIMON, a lord of Ephesus.

THALIARD, a lord of Antioch.

PFIILEMON, servant to Cerimon.

LEONINE, servant to Dionyza.

Marshal.

A Pandar.

BOULT, his servant.

The Daughter of Antiochus.

DIONYZA, wife to Cleon.

THAISA, daughter to Simonides.

MARINA, daughter to Pericles and Thaisa.

LYCHORIDA, nurse to Marina.

A Bawd.

Lords, Knights, Gentlemen, Sailors, Pirates, Fishermen, and
Messengers.

DIANA.

GOWER, as Chorus.

SCENE: Dispersedly in various countries.

ACT I.

[Enter GOWER.]

[Before the palace of Antioch.]

To sing a song that old was sung,
From ashes ancient Gower is come;
Assuming man's infirmities,
To glad your ear, and please your eyes.
It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy-ales;
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives:
The purchase is to make men glorious;
Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius.
If you, born in these latter times,
When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
And that to hear an old man sing
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might
Waste it for you, like taper-light.
This Antioch, then, Antiochus the Great
Built up, this city, for his chiefest seat;
The fairest in all Syria,
I tell you what mine authors say:
This king unto him took a fere,
Who died and left a female heir,
So buxom, so blithe, and full of face,
As heaven had lent her all his grace;
With whom the father liking took,
And her to incest did provoke:
Bad child; worse father! to entice his own
To evil should be done by none:
But custom what they did begin
Was with long use account no sin.
The beauty of this sinful dame
Made many princes thither frame,
To seek her as a bed-fellow,
In marriage-pleasures play-fellow:
Which to prevent he made a law,

To keep her still, and men in awe,
That whoso ask'd her for his wife,
His riddle told not, lost his life:
So for her many a wight did die,
As yon grim looks do testify.
What now ensues, to the judgement your eye
I give, my cause who lest can justify.

[Exit.]

SCENE I. Antioch. A room in the palace.

[Enter ANTIOCHUS, PRINCE PERICLES, and followers.]

ANTIOCHUS.

Young prince of Tyre, you have at large received
The danger of the task you undertake.

PERICLES.

I have, Antiochus, and, with a soul
Embolden'd with the glory of her praise,
Think death no hazard in this enterprise.

ANTIOCHUS.

Bring in our daughter, clothed like a bride,
For the embracements even of Jove himself;
At whose conception, till Lucina reign'd,
Nature this dowry gave, to glad her presence,
The senate-house of planets all did sit,
To knit in her their best perfections.

[Music. Enter the Daughter of Antiochus.]

PERICLES

See where she comes, apparell'd like the spring,
Graces her subjects, and her thoughts the king
Of every virtue gives renown to men!
Her face the book of praises, where is read
Nothing but curious pleasures, as from thence
Sorrow were ever razed, and testy wrath
Could never be her mild companion.

You gods that made me man, and sway in love,
That have inflamed desire in my breast
To taste the fruit of yon celestial tree,
Or die in the adventure, be my helps,
As I am son and servant to your will,
To compass such a boundless happiness!

ANTIOCHUS.

Prince Pericles, —

PERICLES.

That would be son to great Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS.

Before thee stands this fair Hesperides,
With golden fruit, but dangerous to be touch'd;
For death-like dragons here affright thee hard:
Her face, like heaven, enticeth thee to view
Her countless glory, which desert must gain;
And which, without desert, because thine eye
Presumes to reach, all thy whole heap must die.
Yon sometimes famous princes, like thyself,
Drawn by report, adventurous by desire,
Tell thee, with speechless tongues and semblance pale,
That without covering, save yon field of stars,
Here they stand Martyrs, slain in Cupid's wars;
And with dead cheeks advise thee to desist
For going on death's net, whom none resist.

PERICLES.

Antiochus, I thank thee, who hath taught
My frail mortality to know itself,
And by those fearful objects to prepare
This body, like to them, to what I must;
For death remember'd should be like a mirror,
Who tells us life 's but breath, to trust it error.
I'll make my will then, and, as sick men do
Who know the world, see heaven, but, feeling woe,
Gripe not at earthly joys as erst they did;

So I bequeath a happy peace to you
And all good men, as every prince should do;
My riches to the earth from whence they came;
But my unspotted fire of love to you.

[To the daughter of Antiochus.]

Thus ready for the way of life or death,
I wait the sharpest blow, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS.

Scorning advice, read the conclusion, then:
Which read and not expounded, 'tis decreed,
As these before thee thou thyself shalt bleed.

DAUGHTER.

Of all say'd yet, mayst thou prove prosperous!
Of all say'd yet, I wish thee happiness!

PERICLES

Like a bold champion, I assume THE lists,
Nor ask advice of any other thought
But faithfulness and courage.

[He reads the riddle.]

I am no viper, yet I feed
On mother's flesh which did me breed.
I sought a husband, in which labour
I found that kindness in a father:
He's father, son, and husband mild;
I mother, wife, and yet his child.
How they may be, and yet in two,
As you will live, resolve it you.
Sharp physic is the last: but, O you powers
That give heaven countless eyes to view men's acts,
Why cloud they not their sights perpetually,
If this be true, which makes me pale to read it?

Fair glass of light, I loved you, and could still,

[Takes hold of the hand of the Princess.]

Were not this glorious casket stored with ill:
But I must tell you, now my thoughts revolt;
For he's no man on whom perfections wait
That, knowing sin within, will touch the gate,
You are a fair viol, and your sense the strings;
Who, finger'd to make man his lawful music,
Would draw heaven down, and all the gods to hearken;
But being play'd upon before your time,
Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime.
Good sooth, I care not for you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Prince Pericles, touch not, upon thy life,
For that's an article within our law,
As dangerous as the rest. Your time's expired:
Either expound now, or receive your sentence.

PERICLES.

Great king,
Few love to hear the sins they love to act;
'Twould braid yourself too near for me to tell it.
Who has a book of all that monarchs do,
He's more secure to keep it shut than shown:
For vice repeated is like the wandering wind,
Blows dust in others' eyes, to spread itself;
And yet the end of all is bought thus dear,
The breath is gone, and the sore eyes see clear
To stop the air would hurt them. The blind mole casts
Copp'd hills towards heaven, to tell the earth is throng'd
By man's oppression; and the poor worm doth die for't.
Kind are earth's gods; in vice their law's their will;
And if Jove stray, who dares say Jove doth ill?
It is enough you know; and it is fit,
What being more known grows worse, to smother it.
All love the womb that their first bred,

Then give my tongue like leave to love my head.

ANTIOCHUS.[Aside]

Heaven, that I had thy head! he has found the meaning:
But I will gloze with him. — Young prince of Tyre.
Though by the tenour of our strict edict,
Your exposition misinterpreting,
We might proceed to cancel of your days;
Yet hope, succeeding from so fair a tree
As your fair self, doth tune us otherwise:
Forty days longer we do respite you;
If by which time our secret be undone,
This mercy shows we'll joy in such a son:
And until then your entertain shall be
As doth befit our honour and your worth.

[Exeunt all but Pericles.]

PERACLES.

How courtesy would seem to cover sin,
When what is done is like an hypocrite,
The which is good in nothing but in sight!
If it be true that I interpret false,
Then were it certain you were not so bad
As with foul incest to abuse your soul;
Where now you're both a father and a son,
By your untimely claspings with your child,
Which pleasure fits an husband, not a father;
And she an eater of her mother's flesh,
By the defiling of her parent's bed;
And both like serpents are, who though they feed
On sweetest flowers, yet they poison breed.
Antioch, farewell! for wisdom sees, those men
Blush not in actions blacker than the night,
Will shun no course to keep them from the light.
One sin, I know, another doth provoke;
Murder's as near to lust as flame to smoke:
Poison and treason are the hands of sin,
Ay, and the targets, to put off the shame:
Then, lest my life be cropp'd to keep you clear,

By flight I 'll shun the danger which I fear.

[Exit.]

[Re-enter Antiochus.]

ANTIOCHUS.

He hath found the meaning, for which we mean
To have his head.

He must not live to trumpet forth my infamy,
Nor tell the world Antiochus doth sin
In such a loathed manner;
And therefore instantly this prince must die;
For by his fall my honour must keep high.
Who attends us there?

[Enter Thaliard.]

THALIARD.

Doth your highness call?

ANTIOCHUS.

Thaliard,
You are of our chamber, and our mind partakes
Her private actions to your secrecy;
And for your faithfulness we will advance you.
Thaliard, behold, here's poison, and here's gold;
We hate the prince of Tyre, and thou must kill him:
It fits thee not to ask the reason why,
Because we Bid it. Say, is it done?

THALIARD.

My lord,
Tis done.

ANTIOCHUS.

Enough.

[Enter a Messenger.]

Let your breath cool yourself, telling your haste.

MESSENGER.

My lord, prince Pericles is fled.

[Exit.]

ANTIOCHUS.

As thou

Wilt live, fly after: and like an arrow shot
From a well-experienced archer hits the mark
His eye doth level at, so thou ne'er return
Unless thou say 'Prince Pericles is dead.'

THALIARD.

My lord,

If I can get him within my pistol's length,
I'll make him sure enough: so, farewell to your highness.

ANTIOCHUS.

Thaliard! adieu!

[Exit Thaliard.]

Till

Pericles be dead,
My heart can lend no succour to my head.

[Exit.]

SCENE II. Tyre. A room in the palace.

[Enter Pericles.]

PERICLES. [To Lords without.]

Let none disturb us. — Why should this change of thoughts,
The sad companion, dull-eyed melancholy,
Be my so used a guest as not an hour,
In the day's glorious walk, or peaceful night,
The tomb where grief should sleep, can breed me quiet?
Here pleasures court mine eyes, and mine eyes shun them,

And danger, which I fear'd, is at Antioch,
Whose arm seems far too short to hit me here:
Yet neither pleasure's art can joy my spirits,
Nor yet the other's distance comfort me.
Then it is thus: the passions of the mind,
That have their first conception by mis-dread
Have after-nourishment and life by care;
And what was first but fear what might he done,
Grows elder now and cares it be not done.
And so with me: the great Antiochus,
'Gainst whom I am too little to contend,
Since he 's so great can make his will his act,
Will think me speaking, though I swear to silence;
Nor boots it me to say I honour him.
If he suspect I may dishonour him:
And what may make him blush in being known,
He'll stop the course by which it might be known;
With hostile forces he'll o'erspread the land,
And with the ostent of war will look so huge,
Amazement shall drive courage from the state;
Our men be vanquish'd ere they do resist,
And subjects punish'd that ne'er thought offence:
Which care of them, not pity of myself,
Who am no more but as the tops of trees,
Which fence the roots they grow by and defend them,
Makes both my body pine and soul to languish,
And punish that before that he would punish.

[Enter Helicanus, with other Lords.]

FIRST LORD.

Joy and all comfort in your sacred breast!

SECOND LORD.

And keep your mind, till you return to us,
Peaceful and comfortable!

HELICANUS.

Peace, peace, and give experience tongue.
They do abuse the king that flatter him:

For flattery is the bellows blows up sin;
The thing the which is flatter'd, but a spark,
To which that blast gives heat and stronger glowing:
Whereas reproof, obedient and in order,
Fits kings, as they are men, for they may err.
When Signior Sooth here does proclaim a peace,
He flatters you, makes war upon your life.
Prince, pardon me, or strike me, if you please;
I cannot be much lower than my knees.

PERICLES.

All leave us else; but let your cares o'erlook
What shipping and what lading is in our haven,
And then return to us.

[Exeunt Lords.]

Helicanus, thou
Hast moved us: what seest thou in our looks?

HELICANUS.

An angry brow, dread lord.

PERICLES.

If there be such a dart in princes' frowns,
How durst thy tongue move anger to our face?

HELICANUS.

How dare the plants look up to heaven, from whence
They have their nourishment?

PERICLES.

Thou know'st I have power
To take thy life from thee.

HELICANUS. [Kneeling.]

I have ground the axe myself;

Do you but strike the blow.

PERICLES.

Rise, prithee, rise.

Sit down: thou art no flatterer:

I thank thee for it; and heaven forbid
That kings should let their ears hear their faults hid!
Fit counsellor and servant for a prince,
Who by thy wisdom makest a prince thy servant,
What wouldst thou have me do?

HELICANUS.

To bear with patience

Such griefs as you yourself do lay upon yourself.

PERICLES.

Thou speak'st like a physician, Helicanus,
That minister'st a potion unto me
That thou wouldst tremble to receive thyself.
Attend me, then: I went to Antioch,
And there as thou know'st, against the face of death,
I sought the purchase of a glorious beauty,
From whence an issue I might propagate,
Are arms to princes, and bring joys to subjects.
Her face was to mine eye beyond all wonder;
The rest — hark in thine ear — as black as incest:
Which by my knowledge found, the sinful father
Seem'd not to strike, but smooth: but thou know'st this,
'Tis time to fear when tyrants seem to kiss.
Which fear so grew in me, I hither fled,
Under the covering of a careful night,
Who seem'd my good protector; and, being here,
Bethought me what was past, what might succeed.
I knew him tyrannous; and tyrants' fears
Decrease not, but grow faster than the years:
And should he doubt it, as no doubt he doth,
That I should open to the listening air
How many worthy princes' bloods were shed,
To keep his bed of blackness unlaid ope,
To lop that doubt, he'll fill this land with arms,

And make pretence of wrong that I have done him;
When all, for mine, if I may call offence,
Must feel war's blow, who spares not innocence:
Which love to all, of which thyself art one,
Who now reprovest me for it, —

HELICANUS.

Alas, sir!

PERICLES.

Drew sleep out of mine eyes, blood from my cheeks,
Musings into my mind, with thousand doubts
How I might stop this tempest ere it came;
And finding little comfort to relieve them,
I thought it princely charity to grieve them.

HELICANUS.

Well, my lord, since you have given me leave to speak,
Freely will I speak. Antiochus you fear,
And justly too, I think, you fear the tyrant,
Who either by public war or private treason
Will take away your life.
Therefore, my lord, go travel for a while,
Till that his rage and anger be forgot,
Or till the Destinies do cut his thread of life.
Your rule direct to any; if to me,
Day serves not light more faithful than I'll be.

PERICLES.

I do not doubt thy faith;
But should he wrong my liberties in my absence?

HELICANUS.

We'll mingle our bloods together in the earth,
From whence we had our being and our birth.

PERICLES.

Tyre, I now look from thee then, and to Tarsus

Intend my travel, where I'll hear from thee;
And by whose letters I'll dispose myself.
The care I had and have of subjects' good
On thee I lay, whose wisdom's strength can bear it.
I'll take thy word for faith, not ask thine oath:
Who shuns not to break one will sure crack both:
But in our orbs we'll live so round and safe,
That time of both this truth shall ne'er convince,
Thou show'dst a subject's shine, I a true prince.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Tyre. An ante-chamber in the Palace.

[Enter Thaliard.]

THALIARD. So, this is Tyre, and this the court. Here must I Kill King Pericles; and if I do it not, I am sure to be hanged at home: 'tis dangerous. Well, I perceive he was a wise fellow, and had good discretion, that, being bid to ask what he would of the king, desired he might know none of his secrets: now do I see he had some reason for 't; for if a king bid a man be a villain, he's bound by the indenture of his oath to be one. Hush! here come the lords of Tyre.

[Enter Helicanus and Escanes, with other Lords of Tyre.]

HELICANUS.

You shall not need, my fellow peers of Tyre,
Further to question me of your king's departure:
His seal'd commission, left in trust with me,
Doth speak sufficiently he 's gone to travel.

THALIARD. [Aside.]

How! the king gone!

HELICANUS.

If further yet you will be satisfied,
Why, as it were unlicensed of your loves,
He would depart, I 'll give some light unto you.
Being at Antioch —

THALIARD. [Aside.]
What from Antioch?

HELICANUS.
Royal Antiochus — on what cause I know not
Took some displeasure at him; at least he judged so:
And doubting lest that he had err'd or sinn'd,
To show his sorrow, he 'ld correct himself;
So puts himself unto the shipman's toil,
With whom each minute threatens life or death.

THALIARD. [Aside.]
Well, I perceive
I shall not be hang'd now, although I would;
But since he 's gone, the king's seas must please
He 'scaped the land, to perish at the sea.
I 'll present myself. Peace to the lords of Tyre!

HELICANUS.
Lord Thaliard from Antiochus is welcome.

THALIARD.
From him I come
With message unto princely Pericles;
But since my landing I have understood
Your lord has betook himself to unknown travels,
My message must return from whence it came.

HELICANUS.
We have no reason to desire it,
Commended to our master, not to us:
Yet, ere you shall depart, this we desire,
As friends to Antioch, we may feast in Tyre.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. Tarsus. A room in the Governor's house.

[Enter Cleon, the governor of Tarsus, with Dionyza, and others.]

CLEON.

My Dionyza, shall we rest us here,
And by relating tales of others' griefs,
See if 'twill teach us to forget our own?

DIONYZA.

That were to blow at fire in hope to quench it;
For who digs hills because they do aspire
Throws down one mountain to cast up a higher.
O my distressed lord, even such our griefs are;
Here they're but felt, and seen with mischief's eyes,
But like to groves, being topp'd, they higher rise.

CLEON.

O Dionyza,
Who wanteth food, and will not say he wants it,
Or can conceal his hunger till he famish?
Our tongues and sorrows do sound deep
Our woes into the air; our eyes do weep,
Till tongues fetch breath that may proclaim them louder;
That, if heaven slumber while their creatures want,
They may awake their helps to comfort them.
I'll then discourse our woes, felt several years,
And wanting breath to speak help me with tears.

DIONYZA.

I'll do my best, sir.

CLEON.

This Tarsus, o'er which I have the government,
A city on whom plenty held full hand,
For riches strew'd herself even in the streets;
Whose towers bore heads so high they kiss'd the clouds,
And strangers ne'er beheld but wonder'd at;
Whose men and dames so jetted and adorn'd,
Like one another's glass to trim them by:
Their tables were stored full, to glad the sight,
And not so much to feed on as delight;
All poverty was scorn'd, and pride so great,

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