Rodogune

A Dramatic Romance
Persons of the Drama

ANTIOCHUS and TIMOCLES, twin-brothers, Princes of Syria, sons of Nicanor and Cleopatra.
Nicanor, of the royal house, general-in-chief of the Syrian armies.

THOAS and LEOSTHENES, Greek nobles of the Kingdom of Syria, generals of its armies.

PHAYLLUS, an official, afterwards Minister of Timocles.

PHILOCTETES, a young Greek noble of Egypt, friend of Antiochus.

MELITUS, a Court official.

CALLICRATES, a young Greek noble of Syria.

THERAS, a gentleman in waiting.

AN EREMITE.

CLEOPATRA, an Egyptian princess, sister of the reigning Ptolemy, Queen of Syria; widow successively of King Nicanor and his brother Antiochus.

RODOGUNE, a princess of Parthia, prisoner in Antioch.

EUNICE, daughter of Nicanor.

CLEONE, sister of Phayllus, in attendance on the Queen.

MENTHO, an Egyptian woman, nurse of Antiochus.

ZOYLIA, an attendant of Cleopatra.
Act I

Antioch. The Palace; a house by the sea.

Scene 1

The Palace in Antioch; Cleopatra’s antechamber. Cleone is seated; to her enters Eunice.

CLEONE
Always he lives!

EUNICE
No, his disease, not he. For the divinity that sits in man From that afflicted body has withdrawn, — Its pride, its greatness, joy, command, the Power Unnameable that struggles with its world: The husk, the creature only lives. But that husk Has a heart, a mind and all accustomed wants, And having these must be, — O, it is pitiful, — Stripped of all real homage, forced to see That none but Death desires him any more.

CLEONE
You pity?

EUNICE
Seems it strange to you? I pity. I loved him not, — who did? But I am human And feel the touch of tears. A death desired Is still a death and man is always man
Although an enemy. If I ever slew,
I think 'twould be with pity in the blow
That it was needed.

CLEONE
That's a foolish thought.

EUNICE
If it were weakness and delayed the stroke.

CLEONE
The Queen waits by him still?

EUNICE
No longer now.
For while officiously she served her lord,
The dying monarch cast a royal look
Of sternness on her. “Cease,” he said, “O woman,
To trouble with thy ill-dissembled joy
My passing. Call thy sons! Before they come
I shall have gone into the shadow. Yet
Too much exult not, lest the angry gods
Chastise thee with the coming of thy sons
At which thou now rejoicest.”

CLEONE
Where is she then
Or who waits on her?

EUNICE
Rodogune.

CLEONE
That slave!
No nobler attendance?
EUNICE
I think I hear the speech
Of upstarts. Are you, Cleone, of that tribe?

CLEONE
I marvel at your strange attraction, Princess,
You fondle and admire a statue of chalk
In a black towel dismally arranged!

EUNICE
She has roses in her pallor, but they are
The memory of a blush in ivory.
She is all silent, gentle, pale and pure,
Dim-natured with a heart as soft as sleep.

CLEONE
She is a twilight soul, not frank, not Greek,
Some Magian’s daughter full of midnight spells.
I think she is a changeling from the dead.
I hate the sorceress!

EUNICE
We shall have a king
Who’s young, Cleone; Rodogune is fair.
What think you of it, you small bitter heart?

CLEONE
He will prefer the roses and the day,
I hope!

EUNICE
Yourself, you think? O, see her walk!
A floating lily in moonlight was her sister.

RODOGUNE enters.

RODOGUNE
His agony ends at last.
CLEONE
Why have you left
Your mistress and your service, Rodogune?

RODOGUNE
She will not have me near her now; she says
I look at her with eyes too wondering and too large.
So she expects alone her husband's end
And her release. Alas, the valiant man,
The king, the trampler of the fields of death!
He called to victory and she ran to him,
He made of conquest his camp-follower. How
He lies forsaken! None regard his end;
His flatterers whisper round him, his no more;
His almost widow smiles. Better would men,
Could they foresee their ending, understand
The need of mercy.

CLEONE
My sandal-string is loose;
Kneel down and tie it, Parthian Rodogune.

EUNICE
You too may feel the need of mercy yet,
Cleone.

CLEOPATRA
Antiochus is dead, is dead, and I
Shall see at last the faces of my sons.
O, I could cry upon the palace-tops
My exultation! Gaze not on me so,
Eunice. I have lived for eighteen years
With silence and my anguished soul within
While all the while a mother's heart in me
Cried for her children's eyelids, wept to touch
The little bodies that with pain I bore.
The long chill dawning came without that joy.
Only my hateful husband and his crown, —
His crown!

EUNICE
To the world he was a man august,
High-thoughted, grandiose, valiant. Leave him to death,
And thou enjoy thy children.

CLEOPATRA
He would not let my children come to me,
Therefore I spit upon his corpse. Eunice,
Have you not thought sometimes how strange it will feel
To see my tall strong sons come striding in
Who were two lisping babes, two pretty babes?
Sometimes I think they are not changed at all
And I shall see my small Antiochus
With those sweet sunlight curls, his father’s curls,
And eyes in which an infant royalty
Expressed itself in glances, Timocles
Holding his brother’s hand and toiling to me
With eyes like flowers wide-opened by the wind
And rosy lips that laugh towards my breast.
Will it not be strange, so sweet and strange?

EUNICE
And when
Will they arrive from Egypt?

CLEOPATRA
Ah, Eunice,
From Egypt! They are here, Eunice.

EUNICE
Here!
Not in this room, dear fool; in Antioch, hid
Where never cruel eyes could come at them.
O, did you think a mother’s hungry heart
Could lose one fluttering moment of delight
After such empty years? Theramenes,—
The swift hawk he is,—by that good illness helped
Darted across and brought them. They’re here, Eunice!
I saw them not even then, not even then
Could clasp, but now Antiochus is dead,
Is dead, my lips shall kiss them! Messengers
Abridge the road with tempest in their hooves
To bring them to me!

Imperil not with memories of hate
The hour of thy new-found felicity;
For souls dislodged are dangerous and the gods
Have their caprices.

Will the Furies stir
Because I hated grim Antiochus?
When I have slain my kin, then let them wake.
The man who’s dead was nothing to my heart:
My husband was Nicanor, my beautiful
High-hearted lord with his bright auburn hair
And open face. When he died miserably
A captive in the hated Parthian’s bonds,
My heart was broken. Only for my babes
I knit the pieces strongly to each other,
My little babes whom I must send away
To Egypt far from me! But for Antiochus,
That gloomy, sullen and forbidding soul,
Harsh-featured, hard of heart, rough mud of camps
And marches,—he was never lord of me.
He was a reason of State, an act of policy;
And he exiled my children. You have not been
A mother!

EUNICE

I will love with you, Cleopatra,
Although to hate unwilling.

CLEOPATRA

Love me and with me
As much as your pale quiet Parthian's loved
Whom for your sake I have not slain.

CLEONE

She too,
The Parthian! — blames you. Was it not she who said,
Your joy will bring a curse upon your sons?

CLEOPATRA

Hast thou so little terror?

EUNICE

Never she said it!

CLEOPATRA

Fear yet; be wise! I cannot any more
Feel anger! Never again can grief be born
In this glad world that gives me back my sons.
I can think only of my children's arms.
There is a diphony of music swells
Within me and it cries a double name,
Twin sounds, Antiochus and Timocles,
Timocles and Antiochus, the two
Changing their places sweetly like a pair
Of happy lovers in my brain.

CLEONE

But which
Shall be our king in Syria?

CLEOPATRA

Both shall be kings,
My kings, my little royal faces made
To rule my breast. Upon a meaner throne
What matters who shall reign for both?

ZOŁYŁA enters.

ZOŁYŁA

Madam,
The banner floats upon that seaward tower.

CLEOPATRA

O my soul, fly to perch there! Shall it not seem
My children’s robes as motherwards they run to me
Tired of their distant play?

She leaves the room followed by Zołyla.

EUNICE

You, you, Cleone! gods are not in the world
If you end happily.

RODOGUNE

Do not reproach her.
I have no complaint against one human creature;
Nature and Fate do all.

EUNICE

Because you were born,
My Rodogune, to suffer and be sweet
As was Cleone to offend. O snake,
For all thy gold and roses!

RODOGUNE

I did not think
Her guiltless sons must pay her debt. Account
Is kept in heaven and our own offences
Too heavy a load for us to bear.

Rodogune and Eunice go out.

CLEONE

The doll,
The Parthian puppet whom she fondles so,
She hardly has a glance for me! I am glad
This gloomy, grand Antiochus is dead.
O now for pastime, dances, youth and flowers!
Youth, youth! for we shall have upon the throne
No grey beard longer, but some glorious boy
Made for delight with whom we shall be young
For ever.

(to Phayllus, as he enters)
Rejoice, brother; he is dead.

PHAYLLUS
It was my desire and fear that killed him then;
For he was nosing into my accounts.
When shall we have these two king-cubs and which
Is the crowned lion?

CLEONE
That is hidden, Phayllus;
You know it.

PHAYLLUS
I know; I wish I also knew
Why it was hidden. Perhaps there is no cause
Save the hiding! Women feign and lie by nature
As the snake coils, no purpose served by it.
Or was it the grim king who’d have it so?

CLEONE
They are in Antioch.
PHAYLLUS

That I knew.

CLEONE

You knew?

PHAYLLUS

Before Queen Cleopatra. They do not sleep
Who govern kingdoms; they have ears and eyes.

CLEONE

Knew and they live!

PHAYLLUS

Why should one slay in vain?
A dying man has nothing left to fear
Or hope for. He belongs to other cares.
Whichever of these Syrian cubs be crowned,
He will be hungry, young and African;
He will need caterers.

CLEONE

Shall they not be found?

PHAYLLUS

In Egypt they have other needs than ours.
There lust’s almost as open as feasting is;
Science and poetry and learned tastes
Are not confined to books, but life’s an art.
There are faint mysteries, there are lurid pomps;
Strong philtres pass and covert drugs. Desire
Is married to fulfilment, pain’s enjoyed
And love sometimes procures his prey for death.
He’ll want those strange and vivid colours here,
Not dull diplomacies and hard rough arms.
Then who shall look to statecraft’s arid needs
If not Phayllus?
CLEONE
We shall rise?

PHAYLLUS
It is that
I came to learn from you. I have a need for growth;
I feel a ray come nearer to my brow,
The world expands before me. Will you assist,—
For you have courage, falsehood, brains,—my growth?
Your own assisted,—that is understood.

CLEONE
Because I am near the Queen?

PHAYLLUS
That helps, perhaps,
But falls below the mark at which I aim.
If you were nearer to the King,—why, then!

CLEONE
Depend on me.

PHAYLLUS
Cleone, we shall rise.
Scene 2

*The colonnade of a house in Antioch, overlooking the sea. Antiochus, Philoctetes.*

**ANTIOCHUS**
The summons comes not and my life still waits.

**PHILOCTETES**
Patience, beloved Antiochus. Even now
He fronts the darkness.

**ANTIOCHUS**
Nothing have I spoken
As wishing for his death. His was a mould
That should have been immortal. But since all
Are voyagers to one goal and wishing’s vain
To hold one traveller back, I keep my hopes.
O Philoctetes, we who missed his life,
Should have the memory of his end! Unseen
He goes from us into the shades, unknown:
We are denied his solemn hours.

**PHILOCTETES**
All men
Are not like thee, my monarch, and this king
Was great but dangerous as a lion is
Who lives in deserts mightily alone.
Admire him from that distance.

**ANTIOCHUS**
O fear and base suspicion, evillest part
Of Nature, how you spoil our grandiose life!
All heights are lowered, our wide embrace restrained,
God’s natural sunshine darkened by your fault.
We were not meant for darkness, plots and hatred
Reading our baseness in another’s mind,
But like good wrestlers, hearty comrades, hearty foes,
To take and give in life’s great lists together
Blows and embraces.

PHILOCTETES  
A mother’s love, a mother’s fears
Earn their excuse.

ANTIOCHUS  
I care not for such love.
O Philoctetes, all this happy night
I could not sleep; for proud dreams came to me
In which I sat on Syria’s puissant throne,
Or marched through Parthia with the iron pomps
Of war resounding in my train, or swam
My charger through the Indus undulant,
Or up to Ganges and the torrid south
Restored once more the Syrian monarchy.
It is divinity on earth to be a king.

PHILOCTETES  
But if the weaker prove the elder born?
If Timocles were Fate’s elected king?

ANTIOCHUS  
Dear merry Timocles! he would not wish
To wear the iron burden of a crown;
If he has joy, it is enough for him.
Sunshine and laughter and the arms of friends
Guard his fine monarchy of cheerful mind.

PHILOCTETES  
If always Fate were careful to fit in
The nature with the lot! But she sometimes
Loves these strange contrasts and crude ironies.

ANTIOCHUS
Has not nurse Mentho often sworn to me
That I, not he, saw earth the first?

PHILOCTETES
And when
Did woman’s tongue except in wrath or malice
Deliver truth that’s bitter?

ANTIOCHUS
Philoctetes,
Do you not wish me to be king?

PHILOCTETES
Why left I then
Nile in his fields and Egypt slumbering
Couchant upon her sands, but to pursue
Your gallant progress sailing through life’s seas
Shattering opponents till your flag flew high,
Sole admiral-ship of all this kingly world?
But since upon this random earth unjust
We travel stumbling to the pyre, not led
By any Power nor any law, and neither
What we desire nor what we deserve
Arrives, but unintelligible dooms
O’ertake us and the travesty of things,
It is better not to hope too much.

ANTIOCHUS
It is better
To lift our hopes heaven-high and to extend them
As wide as earth. Heaven did not give me in vain
This royal nature and this kingly form,
These thoughts that wear a crown. They were not meant
For mockery nor to fret a subject’s heart.
Do you not hear the ardour of those hooves?
My kingdom rides to me.

*He hastens to the other end of the colonnade.*

**PHILOCTETES**

O glorious youth
Whose young heroic arms would gird the world,
I like a proud and anxious mother follow,
Desiring, fearing, drawn by cords of hope and love,
Admire and doubt, exult and quake and chide.
She is so glad of her brave, beautiful child,
But trembles lest his courage and his beauty
Alarm the fatal jealousy that watches us
From thrones unseen.

*Thoas and Melitus enter from the gates.*

**THOAS**

Are these the Syrian twins?

**PHILOCTETES**
The elder of them only, Antiochus
Of Syria.

**THOAS**
Son of Nicanor! Antiochus
The high Seleucid travels the dull stream
And Syria’s throne is empty for his heir.

**ANTIOCHUS**
A glorious sun has fallen then from heaven
Saddening the nations, even those he smote.
It is the rule of Nature makes us rise
Despite our hearts replacing what we love,
And I am happy who am called so soon
To rule a nation of such princely men.
Are you not Thoas?
THOAS
Thoas of Macedon.

ANTIOCHUS
Thoas, we shall be friends. Will it be long
Before we march together through the world
To stable our horses in Persepolis?

He turns to speak to Timocles who has
just entered and goes into the house.

MELITUS
This is a royal style and kingly brow.

THOAS
The man is royal. What a face looks forth
From under that bright aureole of hair!

TIMOCLES
I greet you, Syrians. Shall I know your names?

MELITUS
Melitus. This is Thoas.

TIMOCLES
Melitus?
Oh yes, of Macedon.

MELITUS
No, Antioch.

TIMOCLES
It is the same.
We talked of you in Alexandria and in Thebes,
All of you famous captains. Your great names
Are known to us, as now yourselves must be
Known and admired and loved.
MELITUS

Your courtesy
Overwhelms me; but I am no captain, only
The King’s poor chamberlain, your servant come
To greet you.

TIMOCLES

Not therefore less a cherished friend
Whose duty helps our daily happiness.
Thoas, your name is in our country’s book
Inscribed too deeply to demand poor praise
From one who never yet has drawn his sword
In anger.

THOAS

I am honoured, Prince. Do not forget
Your mother is waiting for you after eighteen years.

TIMOCLES

My mother! O, I have a mother at last.
You lords shall tell me as we go, how fair
She is or dark like our Egyptian dames,
Noble and tall or else a brevity
Of queenhood. And her face — but that, be sure,
Is the sweet loving face I have seen so often
In Egypt when I lay awake at night
And heard the breezes whispering outside
With many voices in the moonlit hours.
It is late, Thoas, is it not, a child to see
His mother when eighteen years have made him big?
This, this is Paradise, a mother, friends
And Syria. In our swart Egypt ’twas no life, —
Although I liked it well when I was there;
But O, your Syria! I have spent whole hours
Watching your gracile Syrian women pass
With their bright splendid faces. And your flowers,
What flowers! and best of all, your sun, not like
That burning Egypt, but a warmth, a joy
And a kind brightness. It will be all pleasure
To reign in such a country.

ANTIOCHUS (returning from the house)
Let us ride
Into our kingdom.

TIMOCLES
Antioch in sweet Syria,
The realm for gods, and Daphne’s golden groves,
And swift Orontes hastening to the sea!
Ride by me, Melitus, tell me everything.
Scene 3

*Cleopatra’s antechamber in the Palace.*
*Cleopatra, seated; Rodogune.*

**CLEOPATRA**
It is their horsehooves ride into my heart.
It shall be done. What have I any more
To do with hatred? Parthian Rodogune,
Have you forgotten now your former pomps
And princely thoughts in high Persepolis,
Or do your dreams still linger near a throne?

**RODOGUNE**
I think all fallen beings needs must keep
Some dream out of their happier past,—or else
How hard it would be to live!

**CLEOPATRA**
O, if some hope survive
In the black midst of care, however small,
We can live, then only, O then only.

**RODOGUNE**
Hope!
I have forgotten how men hope.

**CLEOPATRA**
Is your life hard
In Syrian Antioch, Rodogune, a slave
To your most bitter foemen?
RODOGUNE

Not when you speak
So gently. Always I strive to make it sweet
By outward harmony with circumstance
And a calm soul within that is above
My fortunes.

CLEOPATRA

Parthian, you have borne the hate
My husband's murder bred in me towards all
Your nation. When I felt you with my heel,
I trampled Tigris and Euphrates then
And Parthia suffered. Therefore I let you live
Half-loving in your body my revenge.
But these are cruel and unhappy thoughts
I hope to slay and bury with the past
Which gave them birth. Will you assist me, girl?
Will you begin with me another life
And other feelings?

RODOGUNE

If our fates allow
Which are not gentle.

CLEOPATRA

My life begins again,
My life begins again in my dear sons
And my dead husband lives. All's sweetly mended.
I do not wish for hatred any more.
The horrible and perilous hands of war
Appal me. O, let our peoples sit at ease
In Grecian Antioch and Persepolis,
Mothers and children, clasping those golden heads
Deep, deep within our bosoms, never allow
Their going forth again to bonds and death.
Peace, peace, let us have peace for ever more.
RODOGUNE
And will peace take me to my father’s arms?

CLEOPATRA
Or else detain you on a kingly throne.
There are happier fetters.

RODOGUNE
If it must be so!

CLEOPATRA
Art thou insensible or fearst to rise?
I cannot think that even in barbarous lands
Any called human are so made that they prefer
Serfhood and scourge to an imperial throne.
Or is there such a soul?

RODOGUNE
Shall I not know
My husband first?

CLEOPATRA
I did not ask your choice,
But gave you a command to be obeyed
Like any other that each day I give.

RODOGUNE
Shall I be given him as a slave, not wife?

CLEOPATRA
You rise, I think, too quickly with your fate.
Or art thou other than I saw or thou
Feignedst to be? Hast thou been wearing all this while
Only a mask of smooth servility,
Thou subtle barbarian?
RODOGUNE
Speak not so harshly to me
Who spoke so gently now. I will obey.

CLEOPATRA
Hop’st thou by reigning to reign over me
Restoring on a throne thy Parthian soul?

RODOGUNE
What shall I be upon the Syrian throne
Except your first of slaves who am now the last,
The least considered? I hope not to reign,
Nor ever have desired ambitious joys,
Only the love that I have lacked so long
Since I left Parthia.

CLEOPATRA
Obey me then. Remember,
The hand that seats thee can again unthrone.

RODOGUNE
I shall remember and I shall obey.

She retires to her station.

CLEOPATRA
Her flashes of quick pride are quickly past.
After so many cruel, black and pitiless years
Shall not the days to come conspire for joy?
The Queen shall be my slave, a mind that’s trained
To watch for orders, one without a party
In Syria, with no will to take my son from me
Or steal my sovereign station. O, they come!
Slowly, my heart! break not with too much bliss.

Eunice comes in swiftly.

EUNICE
Am I the first to tell you they have come?
Act I, Scene 3

CLEOPATRA
O girl, thy tongue rain joy upon the world,
That speaks to me of heaven!

Cleone enters.

CLEONE (to Eunice)
They are more beautiful than heaven and earth.
(to Cleopatra)
Thy children’s feet are on the palace stairs.

CLEOPATRA
O no! not of the palace but my heart;
I feel their tread ascending. Be still, be still,
Thou flutterer in my breast: I am a queen
And must not hear thee.

Thoas and Melitus enter bringing
in Antiochus and Timocles.

THOAS
Queen, we bring her sons
To Cleopatra.

CLEOPATRA
I thank you both. Approach.
Why dost thou beat so hard within to choke me?
She motions to them to stop and
gazes on them in silence.

TIMOCLES
This is my mother. She is what I dreamed!

EUNICE
O high inhabitants of Greek Olympus,
Which of you all comes flashing down from heaven
To snare us mortals with this earthly gaze,
These simulations of humanity?
CLEOPATRA
Say to the Syrians they shall know their king
In the gods’ time and hour. But these first days
Are for a mother.

THOAS
None shall grudge them to thee,
Remembering the gods’ debt to thee, Cleopatra.
Thoas and Melitus leave the chamber.

CLEOPATRA
My children, O my children, my sweet children!
Come to me, come to me, come into my arms.
You beautiful, you bright, you tall heart-snarers,
You are all your father.

TIMOCLES
Mother, my sweet mother!
I have been dreaming of you all these years,
Mother!

CLEOPATRA
And was the dream too fair, my child?
O strange, sweet bitterness that I must ask
My child his name!

TIMOCLES
I am your Timocles.

CLEOPATRA
You first within my arms! O right, ’tis right!
It is your privilege, my sweet one. Kiss me.
O yet again, my young son Timocles.
O bliss, to feel the limbs that I have borne
Within me! O my young radiant Timocles,
You have outgrown to lie upon my lap:
I have not had that mother’s happiness.
TIMOCLES
Mother, I am still your little Timocles
Playing at bigness. You shall not refuse me
The sweet dependent state which I have lost
In that far motherless Egypt where I pined.

CLEOPATRA
And like a child too, little one, you’ld have
All of your mother to yourself. Must I
Then thrust you from me? Let Antiochus,
My tall Antiochus have now his share.

RODOGUNE
He is all high and beautiful like heaven
From which he came. I have not seen before
A thing so mighty.

ANTIOCHUS
Madam, I seek your blessing; let me kneel
To have it.

CLEOPATRA
Kneel! O, in my bosom, son!
Have you too dreamed of me, Antiochus?

ANTIOCHUS
Of great Nicanor’s widow and the Queen
Of Syria and my sacred fount of life.

CLEOPATRA
These are cold haughty names, Antiochus.
Not of your mother, not of your dear mother?

ANTIOCHUS
You were for me the thought of motherhood,
A noble thing and sacred. This I loved.
CLEOPATRA
No more? Are you so cold in speech, my son?
O son Antiochus, you have received
Your father’s face; I hope you have his heart.
Do you not love me?

ANTIOCHUS
Surely I hope to love.

CLEOPATRA
You hope!

ANTIOCHUS
O madam, do not press my words.

CLEOPATRA
I do press them. Your words, your lips, your heart,
Your radiant body noble as a god’s
I, I made in my womb, to give them light
Bore agony. I have a claim upon them all.
You do not love me?

ANTIOCHUS
The thought of you I have loved,
Honoured and cherished. By your own decree
We have been to each other only thoughts;
But now we meet. I trust I shall not fail
In duty, love and reverence to my mother.

EUNICE
His look is royal, but his speech is cold.

RODOGUNE
Should he debase his godhead with a lie?
She is to blame and her unjust demand.
Act I, Scene 3

CLEOPATRA
It is well. My heart half slew me for only this! O Timocles, my little Timocles, Let me again embrace you, let me feel My child who dreamed of me for eighteen years In Egypt. Sit down here against my knee And tell me of Egypt, — Egypt where I was born, Egypt where my sweet sons were kept from me, Dear Egypt, hateful Egypt!

TIMOCLES
I loved it well because it bore my mother, But not so well, my mother far from me.

CLEOPATRA
What was your life there? Your mornings and your evenings, Your dreams at night, I must possess them all, All the sweet years my arms have lost. Did you Rising in those clear mornings see the Nile, Our father Nile, flow through the solemn azure Past the great temples in the sands of Egypt? You have seen hundred-gated Thebes, my Thebes, And my high tower where I would sit at eve Watching your kindred sun? And Alexandria With the white multitude of sails! My brother, The royal Ptolemy, did he not love To clasp his sister in your little limbs? There is so much to talk of; but not now! Eunice, take them from me for a while. Take Rodogune and call the other slaves. Let them array my sons like the great kings They should have been so long. Go, son Antiochus; Go, Timocles, my little Timocles.

ANTIOCHUS
We are the future’s greatness, therefore owe Some duty to the grandeurs of the past.
The great Antiochus lies hardly cold,
Garbed for his journey. I would kneel by him
And draw his mightiness into my soul
Before the gloomy shades have taken away
What earth could hardly value.

EUNICE
This was a stab.
Is there some cold ironic god at work?

CLEOPATRA
The great Antiochus! Of him you dreamed?
You are his nephew! Parthian, take the prince
To the dead King’s death-chamber, then to his own.

ANTIOCHUS
She was the Parthian! Great Antiochus,
Syria thou leav’st me and her and Persia afterwards
To be my lovely captive.

He goes out with Rodogune.

TIMOCLES (as he follows Eunice)
Tell me, cousin,—
I knew not I had such sweet cousins here,—
Was this the Parthian princess Rodogune?

EUNICE
Phraates’ daughter, Prince, your mother’s slave.

TIMOCLES
There are lovelier faces then than Syria owns.

He goes out with Eunice.

CLEOPATRA
You gods, you gods in heaven, you give us hearts
For life to trample on! I am sick, Cleone.
CLEONE
Why, Madam, what a son you have in him,
The joyous fair-faced Timocles, yet you are sick!

CLEOPATRA
But the other, oh, the other! Antiochus!
He has the face that gives my husband back to me,
But does not love me.

CLEONE
Yet he will be king.
You said he was the elder.

CLEOPATRA
Did I say it?
I was perplexed.

CLEONE
He will be king, a man
With a cold joyless heart and thrust you back
Into some distant corner of your house
And rule instead and fill with clamorous war
Syria and Parthia and the banks of Indus
Taking our lovers and our sons to death!
Our sons! Perhaps he will take Timocles
And offer him, a lovely sacrifice,
To the grim god of battles.

CLEOPATRA
My Timocles! my only joy! Oh, no!
We will have peace henceforth and bloodless dawns.
My envoys ride today.

CLEONE
He will recall them.
This is no man to rest in peaceful ease
While other sceptres sway the neighbouring realms.
War and Ambition from his eyes look forth;
His hand was made to grasp a sword-hilt. Queen,
Prevent it; let our Timocles be king.

CLEOPATRA
What did you say? Have you gone mad, Cleone?
The gods would never bless such vile deceit.
O, if it could have been! but it cannot.

CLEONE
It must.
Timocles dead, you a neglected mother,
A queen dethroned, with one unloving child,—
Childless were better,—and your age as lonely
As these long nineteen years have been. Then you had hope,
You will have none hereafter.

CLEOPATRA
If I thought that,
I would transgress all laws yet known or made
And dare Heaven’s utmost anger. Gods who mock me,
I will not suffer to all time your wrongs.
Hush, hush, Cleone! It shall not be so.
I thought my heart would break with joy, but now
What different passion tugs at my heart-strings,
Cleone, O Cleone! O my sweet dreams,
Where have you gone yielding to pangs and fears
Your happy empire? Am I she who left
Laughing the death-bed of Antiochus?

She goes into her chamber.

CLEONE
We must have roses, sunlight, laughter, Prince,
Not cold, harsh light of arms. Your laurels, laurels!
We’ll blast them quickly with a good Greek lie.
Where he has gone, admire Antiochus,
Not here repeat him.
Act II

*The Palace in Antioch.*

Scene 1

_A hall in the Palace._
*Cleon, Phayllus._

**Phayllus**

Worry the conscience of the Queen to death
Like the good bitch thou art. If this goes well,
I may sit unobserved on Syria’s throne.

**Cleon**

Do not forget me.

**Phayllus**

Do not forget thyself,
Then how shall I forget thee?

**Cleon**

I shall remember.

**Phayllus**

If for a game you were the queen, Cleon,
And I your minister, how would you start
Your play of reigning?

**Cleon**

I would have many perfect tortures made
To hurt the Parthian with, for every nerve
A torture. I would lie in flowers the while
Drinking sweet Cyprian wine and hear her moan.

PHAYLLUS
I do not like your thought; have better ones.

CLEONE
Shall I not satisfy my love, my hate?
Then just as well I might not reign at all.

PHAYLLUS
O hatred, love and wrath, you instruments
By which we are driven! Cleone, the gods use these
For their own purposes, not we for ours.

CLEONE
I'll do my will, Phayllus; you do yours.

PHAYLLUS
Our kingdom being won! It is not, yet.
  (turning away)
She’s too violent for my calmer ends;
Lust drives her, not ambition. I wait on you,
You gods who choose. If Fate intends my rise,
She will provide the instruments and cause.

Timocles enters from the inner palace.

TIMOCLES
I think I am afraid to speak to her.
I never felt so with the Egyptian girls
In Thebes or Alexandria. Are you not
Phayllus?

PHAYLLUS
You remember faces well
And have the trick for names, the monarch’s trick.
TIMOCLES
Antiochus, all say, will be the king.

PHAYLLUS
But I say otherwise and what I say
Has a strange gift of happening.

TIMOCLES
You’re my friend!

PHAYLLUS
My own and therefore yours.

TIMOCLES
This is your sister?

PHAYLLUS
Cleone.

TIMOCLES
A name that in its sound agrees
With Syria’s roses. Are you too my friend,
Cleone?

CLEONE
Your subject, prince.

TIMOCLES
And why not both?

CLEONE
To serve is better.

TIMOCLES
Shall I try your will?

(embracing her)
Thou art warm fire against the lips, thou rose
Cleone.
CLEONE
May I test in turn?

TIMOCLES
Oh, do!

CLEONE
A rose examines by her thorns, — as thus.
She strikes him lightly on the cheek and goes out.

TIMOCLES (looking uncertainly at Phayllus who is stroking his chin)
It was a courtesy, — our Egyptian way.

PHAYLLUS
Hers was the Syrian. Do not excuse yourself;
I am her brother.

TIMOCLES (turns as if to go, hesitates, then comes back)
Oh, have you met, Phayllus,
A Parthian lady here named Rodogune?

PHAYLLUS
Blows the wind east? But if it brings me good,
Let it blow where it will. I know the child.
She’s fair. You’d have her?

TIMOCLES
Fie on you, Phayllus!

PHAYLLUS
Prince, I have a plain tongue which, when I hunger,
Owens that there is a belly. Speak in your language!
I understand men’s phrases though I use them not.

TIMOCLES
Think not that evil! She is not like those,
The common flowers which have a fair outside
Of beauty, but the common hand can pluck.  
We wear such lightly, smell and throw away.  
She is not like them.

**PHAYLLUS**

No? Yet were they all  
Born from one mother Nature. What if she wears  
The quick barbarian’s robe called modesty?  
There is a woman always in the end  
Behind that shimmering. Pluck the robe, ’twill fall;  
Then is she Nature’s still.

**TIMOCLES**

I have seen her eyes; they are a liquid purity.

**PHAYLLUS**

And yet a fish swims there which men call love,  
But truth names lust or passion. Fear not, prince;  
The fish will rise to such an angler’s cast.

**TIMOCLES**

Mistake me not, nor her. These things are done,  
But not with such as she; she is heaven-pure  
And must like heaven be by worship won.

**PHAYLLUS**

What is it then that you desire of her  
Or ask of me? I can do always much.

**TIMOCLES**

O nothing else but this, only to kneel,  
Look up at her and touch the little hand  
That fluttered like a moonlit butterfly  
Above my mother’s hair. If she consenting smiled  
A little, I might even dare so much.
PHAYLLUS
Why, she’s your slave-girl!

TIMOCLES
I shall kneel to her
Some day and feel her hand upon my brow.

PHAYLLUS
What animal this is, I hardly know,
But know it is the animal for me:
My genius tells me. Prince, I need a bribe
Before I’ll stir in this.

TIMOCLES
What bribe, Phayllus?

PHAYLLUS
A name, — your friend.

TIMOCLES
O more than merely friend!
Bring me into the temple dim and pure
Whence my own hopes and fears now bar me out,
Then I am yours, Phayllus, you myself
For all things.

PHAYLLUS
Remember me when you have any need.

TIMOCLES
I have a friend! He is the very first
Who was not conquered by Antiochus.
How has this love like lightning leaped at me!

He goes out.
Scene 2

_The same._
_Eunice, Rodogune._

RODOGUNE
Heaven had a purpose in my servitude!
I will believe it.

EUNICE
One sees not now such men.
What a calm royalty his glances wield!
We are their subjects. And he treads the earth
As if it were already his.

RODOGUNE
All must be.
I have lived a slave, yet always held myself
A nobler spirit than my Grecian lords;
But when he spoke, O, when he looked at me,
I felt indeed the touch of servitude
And this time loved it.

EUNICE
O, you too, Rodogune!

RODOGUNE
I too! What do you mean? Are you, Eunice —

EUNICE
I mean, our thorny rose Cleone too
Has fallen in love with pretty Timocles.
RODOGUNE
You slanderer! But I thought a nearer thing
That ran like terror through my heart.

EUNICE
And so
You love him?

RODOGUNE
What have I said, Eunice? what have I said?
I did not say it.

EUNICE
You did not say it, no!
You lovely fool, hide love with blushes then
And lower over your liquid love-filled eyes
Their frightened lashes! Quake, my antelope!
I’ll have revenge at least. O sweet, sweet heart,
My delicate Parthian! I shall never have
Another love, but only Rodogune,
My beautiful barbarian Rodogune
With the tall dainty grace and the large eyes
And vague faint pallor just like twilit ivory.

RODOGUNE
My own Eunice!

They embrace. Phayllus enters.

PHAYLLUS (stroking his chin)
I always hated waste.

EUNICE
Your steps too steal, Phayllus?

PHAYLLUS
I have a message.
Eunice
I do not like the envoy. Find another
And I will hear it.

Phayllus
Come, you put me out.

Eunice
Of your accounts? They say there is too much
You have put out already for your credit.

Phayllus
You’re called. The Queen’s in haste, Cleone said.

Eunice goes.

Parthian, will you be Syria’s queen or no?
I startle you. The royal Timocles
By your beauty strives ensnared. Don not your mask
Of modesty, keep that for Timocles.
I offer you a treaty. By my help
You can advance your foot to Syria’s throne:
His bed’s the staircase and you shall ascend,
Nor will I rest till you are seated there.
Come, have I helped you? Shall we be allies?

Rodogune
You speak a language that I will not hear.

Phayllus
Oh, language! you’re for language, all of you.
Are you not Parthia’s daughter? do you not wish
To sit upon a throne?

Rodogune
Not by your help,
Nor as the bride of Syrian Timocles.
What are these things you speak?
PHAYLLUS

Weigh not my speech,
But only my sincerity. I have a tongue
Displeasing to all women. Heed not that!
My heart is good, my meaning better still.

RODOGUNE

Perhaps! But know I yearn not for a throne.
And if I did, Antiochus is king
And not this younger radiance.

PHAYLLUS

That’s your reason?
You are deceived. Besides he loves you not
Nor ever will put on a female yoke.
Prefer this woman’s clay, this Timocles
And by my help you shall have empire, joy,
All the heart needs, the pleasures bodies use.

RODOGUNE

I need no empire save my high-throned heart,
I seek no power save that of sceptred love,
I ask no help beyond what Ormuzd gives.
Enough. I thank you.

PHAYLLUS

You’re subtler than these Greeks.
Must he then pine? Shall he not plead his cause?

RODOGUNE

I would not have him waste his heart in pain
If what you say is true. Let him then know
This cannot be.

PHAYLLUS

He will not take from me
An answer you yourself alone can give.
I think you parry to be more attacked.

RODOGUNE
Think what you will, but leave me.

PHAYLLUS
If you mean that,
The way to show it is to let him come.
You feign and do not mean this, or else you would
Deny him to his face.

RODOGUNE (flushing angrily)
I will; tell him to come.

PHAYLLUS
I thought so. Come he shall. Remember me.  

He goes out.

RODOGUNE
I did not well to bid him come to me.
It is some passing fancy of the blood.
I do not hear that he was ever hurt
But danced a radiant and inconstant moth
Above the Egyptian blossoms.

Timocles enters hastily, hesitates, then rushes and
throws himself at the feet of Rodogune.

TIMOCLES  
Rodogune!
I love thee, princess; thou hast made me mad.
I know not what I do nor what I speak.
What dreadful god has seized upon my heart?
I am not Timocles and not my own,
But am a fire and am a raging wind
To seize on thee and am a driven leaf.
O Rodogune, turn not away from me.
Forgive me, O, forgive me. I cannot help it
If thou hast made me love thee. Tremble not,  
Nor grow so pale and look with panic glances  
As if a fire had clutched thee by the robe.  
I am thy menial, thy poor trembling slave  
And thou canst slay me with a passing frown.

RODOGUNE  
Touch not my hand! 'tis sacred from thy touch!

TIMOCLES  
It is most sacred; even the roseate nail  
Of thee, O thou pale goddess, is a mystery  
And a strange holiness. Scorched be his hand  
Who dares with lightest sacrilegious touch  
Profane thee, O deep-hearted miracle,  
Unless thy glorious eyes condone the fault  
By growing tender. O thou wondrous Parthian,  
Fear not my love; it grows a cloistered worship.  
See, I can leave thee! see, I can retire.  
Look once on me, one look is food enough  
For many twelvemonths.

Eunice returns.

EUNICE  
You wrong your mother, cousin.  
Her moments linger when you are not there;  
Always she asks for you.

TIMOCLES  
My mother! You gods,  
Forbid it, lest I weary of her love.

He goes.

EUNICE  
What was this? Speak.
RODOGUNE

Was Fate not satisfied
With my captivity? Waits worse behind?
It was a grey and clouded sky before
And bleak enough but quiet. Now I see
Fresh clouds come stored with thunder toiling up
From a black-piled horizon.

EUNICE

Tell me all.
What said Phayllus to you, the dire knave
Who speaks to poison?

RODOGUNE
He spoke of love and thrones and Timocles;
He spoke as selfish cunning men may speak
Who mean some evil they call good.

EUNICE

And how
Came Timocles behind him?

RODOGUNE

Called by him,
With such wild passion burning under his lids
I never thought to see in human eyes.
What are these movements?

EUNICE

We move as we must,
Not as we choose, whatever we may think.
Your beauty is a torch you needs must carry
About the world with you. You cannot help it
If it burns kingdoms.

RODOGUNE
I pray it may not. God who only rulest,
Let not the evil spirit use my love 
To bring misfortune on Antiochus.

Mentho enters.

MENTHO
Which is the Parthian?

EUNICE
She.

MENTHO
Antiochus
Desires you in his chamber with a bowl
Of Lesbian vintage.

EUNICE
Does he desire? The gods then choose their hour
For intervention. Move, you Parthian piece.

RODOGUNE
Send someone else. I cannot go.

EUNICE
I think
You have forgotten that you are a slave.
You are my piece and I will have you move.
Move quickly.

RODOGUNE
Surely he did not speak my name?

MENTHO
Why do you fear, my child? He's good and noble
And kind in speech and gentle to his servants.

RODOGUNE (low, to herself)
It is not him I fear, it is myself.
EUNICE
Fear me instead. You shall be cruelly whipped
Unless you move this instant.

RODOGUNE
Oh, Eunice!

EUNICE
Whipped savagely! I'll sacrifice so much
For a shy pawn who will not move? Go, go,
And come not back un kissed if you are wise.

She pushes Rodogune to the door and
she goes, followed by Mentho.

His heart's not free, nor hers, or else I'd try
My hand at reigning. As the gods choose. Through her
I may rule Syria.
Scene 3

Antiochus’ chamber.
Antiochus, with a map before him.

ANTIOCHUS

Ecbatana, Susa and Sogdiana,
The Aryan country which the Indus bounds,
Euphrates’ stream and Tigris’ golden sands,
The Oxus and Jaxartes and these mountains
Vague and enormous shouldering the moon
With all their dim beyond of nations huge;
This were an empire! What are Syria, Greece
And the blue littoral to Gades? They are
Too narrow to contain my soul, too petty
To satisfy its hunger and its vastness.
O pale, sweet Parthian face with liquid eyes
Mid darkest masses and O gracious limbs
Obscuring this epitome of earth,
You will not let me fix my eyes on Susa.
I never yearned for any woman yet.
While Timocles with the light Theban dames
Amused his careless heart, I walked aside;
Parthia and Greece became my mistresses.
But now my heart is filled with one pale girl.
Exult not, archer. I will quiet thee
With sudden and assured possession first,
Then keep thee beating an eternal strain.
I have loved her through past lives and many ages.
The Parthian princess, lovely Rodogune!
O name of sweetness! Renowned Phraates’ daughter,
A bud of kings,—my glorious prisoner
With those beseeching eyes. O high Antiochus,
Who snatched her from among her guardian spears,
Thou hast gone past but left this prophecy
Of beautiful conquered Persia grown my slave
To love me. It is thou, my Rodogune!

_Rodogune enters._

**RODOGUNE** (_with lowered eyes_)
I have brought the wine.

**ANTIOCHUS**
Thou art the only wine,
O Parthian! Wine to flush Olympian souls
Is in this glorious flask. Set down the bowl.
Lift up instead thy long and liquid eyes;
I grudge them to the marble, Rodogune.
Thou knowest well why I have sent for thee.
Have we not gazed into each other's eyes
And thine confessed their knowledge?

**RODOGUNE**
Prince, I am
Thy mother's slave.

**ANTIOCHUS**
Mine, mine, O Rodogune,
For I am Syria.

**RODOGUNE**
Thine.

**ANTIOCHUS**
O, thou hast spoken!

**RODOGUNE**
Touch me not, touch me not, Antiochus!
Son of Nicanor, spare me, spare thyself.
O me! I know the gods prepare some death;
I am a living misfortune.

ANTIOCHUS

Wert thou my fate
Of death itself, delightful Rodogune,
Not, as thou art, heaven’s pledge of bliss, I’d not abstain
From thy delight, but have my joy of thee
The short while it is possible on earth.
O, play not with the hours, my Rodogune.
Why should brief man defer his joys and wait
As if life were eternal? Time does not pause,
Death does not tarry.

RODOGUNE

Alas!

ANTIOCHUS

Thou lingerest yet.
Wilt thou deny the beating of our hearts
That call to us to bridge these sundering paces?
O, then I will command thee as a slave.
Thou wouldst not let me draw thee, come thyself
Into my arms, O perfect Rodogune,
My Parthian captive!

RODOGUNE

Antiochus, my king!

ANTIOCHUS

So heave against me like a wave for ever.
Melt warmly into my bosom like the Spring,
O honied breathing tumult!

RODOGUNE

O release me!
ANTIOCHUS
Thou sudden sorceress, die upon my breast!
My arms are cords to bind thee to this stake,
Slowly to burn away in crimson fire.

RODOGUNE
Release me, O release me!

ANTIOCHUS
Not till our lips have joined
Eternal wedlock. With this stamp and this
And many more I’ll seal thee to myself.
Eternal Time’s too short for all the kisses
I yearn for from thee, O pale loveliness,
Dim mystery! Press thy lips to mine. Obey.
Again! and so again and even for ever
Chant love, O marvel, let thy lips’ wild music
Come faltering from thy heart into my bosom.

Rodogune sinks at his feet and embraces his knees.

RODOGUNE
I am thine, thine, thine, thine for ever.
She rises and hides her face in her hands.

ANTIOCHUS (uncovering her face)
Beloved,
Hide not thy face from love. The gods in heaven
Look down on us; let us look up at them
With fearless eyes of candid joy and tell them
Not Time nor any of their dooms can move us now.
The passion of oneness two hearts are this moment
Denies the steps of death for ever.

RODOGUNE
My heart
Stops in me. I can bear no more of bliss.
Oh, leave me now that I may live for thee.

ANTIOCHUS
Stay where thou art. Or go, for thou art mine
And I can send thee from me when I will
And call thee when I will. Go, Rodogune
Who yet remain with me.

Rodogune leaves the chamber with faltering steps.

O Love, thou art
Diviner in the enjoying. Can I now
Unblinded scan this map? No, she is there;
It is her eyes I see and not Ecbatana.
Scene 4

The hall in the Palace.
Timocles, Phayllus.

TIMOCLES
O, all the sweetness and the glory gathered
Into one smiling life, the other’s left
Barren, unbearable, bleak, desolate,
A hell of silence and of emptiness
Impossible for mortal souls to imagine,
Much less to suffer. My mother does this wrong to me!
Why should not we, kind brothers all our lives,—
O, how we loved each other there in Egypt! —
Divide this prize? Let his be Syria’s crown,—
Oh, let him take it! I have Rodogune.

PHAYLLUS
He will consent?

TIMOCLES
Oh, yes, and with a smile.
He is all loftiness and warlike thoughts.
My high Antiochus! how could I dream
Of taking from him what he’d wear so well?
Let me have love and joy and Rodogune.
The sunlight is enough for me.

PHAYLLUS
It may be,
Yet not enough for both. Look! there he comes
Carrying himself as if he were the sun
Brilliant alone in heaven. Oh, that to darken!

Antiochus enters.
Brother, it is the kind gods send you here.

Dear Timocles, we meet not all the day. It was not so in Egypt. Tell me now, What were you doing all these busy hours? How many laughing girls of this fair land Have you lured on to love you?

TIMOCLES Have you not heard?

ANTIOCHUS What, Timocles?

TIMOCLES Our mother gives the crown And with the crown apportions Rodogune.

ANTIOCHUS Our royal mother? Are they hers to give? I do not marry by another’s will.

TIMOCLES O brother, no; our hearts at least are ours. You have not marked, I think, Antiochus, This pale sweet Parthian Rodogune?

ANTIOCHUS (smiling) No, brother? I have not marked, you say?

TIMOCLES You are so blind To woman’s beauty. You only woo great deeds And arms imperial. It is well for me You rather chose to wed the grandiose earth.
I am ashamed to tell you, dear Antiochus,
I grudged the noble crown that soon will rest
So gloriously upon you. Take it, brother,
But leave me my dim goddess Rodogune.

ANTIOCHUS
Thy goddess! thine!

TIMOCLES
It is not possible
That you too love her!

ANTIOCHUS
What is it to thee whom or what I love?
Say that I love her not?

TIMOCLES
Then is my offer
Just, brotherly, not like this causeless wrath.

ANTIOCHUS
Thy wondrous offer! Of two things that are mine
To fling me one with “There! I want it not,
I’ll take the other”!

TIMOCLES (in a suffocated voice)
Has she made thee king?

ANTIOCHUS
I need no human voice to make me anything
Who am king by birth and nature. Who else should reign
In Syria? Thoughtst thou thy light and shallow head
Was meant to wear a crown?

TIMOCLES
In Egypt you were not like this, Antiochus.
See not the Parthian even in dreams at night!
Remember not her name!

She is my mother’s slave:
I’ll ask for her and have her.

Thou shalt have
My sword across thy heart-strings first. She is
The kingdom’s prize and with the kingdom mine.

My dream, my goddess with those wondrous eyes!
My sweet veiled star cloistered in her own charm!
I will not yield her to thee, nor the crown,
Not wert thou twenty times my brother.

Delightful! O my fortune! my kind fortune!

Thou lov’st her not who dar’st to think of her
As if she were a prize for any arms,
Thy slave, thy chattel.

Speak not another word.

More! more! My star, thou risest o’er this storm.

I pardon thee, my brother Timocles;
Thy light passions are thy excuse. Henceforth
Offend not. For the Parthian, she is mine
And I would keep her though a god desired.
Exalt not thy presumptuous eyes henceforth
Higher than are her sandals.

He goes out.

PHAYLLUS

This is your brother!
Shall he not have the crown?

TIMOCLES

Nor her, nor Syria.

Rodogune and Eunice enter
-passing through the hall.
Timocles rushes to her.

My Rodogune, my star! Thou knowest the trade
Which others seek to make of thee. Resist it,
Prevent the insult of this cold award!
Say that thou lov’st me.

RODOGUNE

Prince, I pity thee,
But cannot love.

She passes out.

EUNICE

My cousin Timocles,
All flowers are not for your plucking. Roses
Enough that crave to satisfy your want,
Are grown in Syria; take them. Here be wise;
Touch not my Parthian blossom.

She passes out.

TIMOCLES

How am I smitten as with a thunderbolt!
Phayllus
Will you be dashed by this? They make her think
Antiochus will reign in Syria.

Timocles
No,
She loves him.

Phayllus
Is love so quickly born? Oh, then,
It will as quickly die. Eunice works here
To thwart you; she is for Antiochus.

Timocles
All, all are for Antiochus, the crown,
And Syria and men’s homage, women’s hearts
And life and sweetness and my love.

Phayllus
Young prince,
Be more a man. Besiege the girl with gifts
And graces; woo her like a queen or force her
Like what she is, a slave. Be strong, be sudden,
Forestalling this proud brother.

Timocles
I would not wrong her pure and shrouded soul
Though all the gods in heaven should give me leave.

Phayllus
The graceful, handsome fool! Then from your mother
Demand her as a gift.

Timocles (going)
My soul once more
Is hunted by the tempest.
Scene 5

Cleopatra’s chamber.
Cleopatra, Cleone.

CLEOPATRA
I am resolved; but Mentho the Egyptian knows
The true precedence of the twins. Send her to me.

Cleone goes out.

CLEOPATRA
O you, high-seated cold divinities,
You sleep sometimes, they say you sleep. Sleep now!
I only loosen what your careless wills
Have tangled.

MENTHO enters.

MENTHO
Dead! Can truth die?

CLEOPATRA
Ah, Mentho, truth! But truth
Is often terrible. Justice! but was ever
Justice yet seen upon the earth? Man lives
Because he is not just and real right
Dwells not with law and custom but for him
It grows by whose arriving our brief happiness
Is best assured and grief prohibited
For a while to mortals.

MENTHO
This is the thing I feared.
O wickedness! Well, Queen, I understand.

CLEOPATRA
Not less than you I love Antiochus;
But Timocles seeks Parthian Rodogune.
O, if these brother-loves should turn to hate
And slay us all! Then rather let thy nursling stand,—
Will he not rule whoever fills the throne? —
Approved of heaven and earth, indeed a king,
Protector of the weaker Timocles,
His right hand in his wars, his pillar, guard
And sword of action, grand in loyalty,
Kingly in great subjection, famed for love.
Then there shall be no grief for anyone
And everything consent to our desires.

MENTHO
Queen Cleopatra, shall I speak? shall I
Forget respect? The god demands my voice.
I tell thee then that thy rash brain has hatched
A wickedness beyond all parallel,
A cold, unmotherly and cruel plot
Thou striv’st in vain to alter with thy words.
O nature self-deceived! O blinded heart!
It is the husband of thy boasted love,
Woman, thou wrongest in thy son.

CLEOPATRA
Alas,
Mentho, my nurse, thou knowest not the cause.

MENTHO
I do not need to know. Art thou Olympian Zeus?
Has he given thee his sceptre and his charge
To guide the tangled world? Wilt thou upset
His rulings? wilt thou improve his providence?
Are thy light woman’s brain and shallow love
Act II, Scene 5

A better guide than his all-seeing eye?
O wondrous arrogance of finite men
Who would know better than omniscient God!
Beware his thunders and observe his will.
What he has made, strive not to unmake, but shun
The tragical responsibility
Of such dire error. If from thy act spring death
And horror, are thy human shoulders fit
To bear that heavy load? Observe his will,
Do right and leave the rest to God above.

CLEOPATRA
Thy words have moved me.

MENTHO
Let thy husband move thee.
How wilt thou meet him in the solemn shades?
Will he not turn his royal face from thee
Saying, “Murderess of my children, come not near me!”

CLEOPATRA
O Mentho, curse me not. My husband’s eyes
Shall meet me with a smile. Mentho, my nurse,
You will not tell this to Antiochus?

MENTHO
I am not mad nor wicked. Remain fixed
In this resolve. Dream not that happiness
Can spring from wicked roots. God overrules
And Right denied is mighty.
Act III

The Palace in Antioch. Under the hills.

Scene 1

The Audience-Chamber in the Palace.
Nicanor, Phayllus and others seated; Eunice, Philoctetes, Thoas apart near the dais.

THOAS
Is it patent? Is he the elder? do we know?

EUNICE
Should he not rule?

THOAS
If Fate were wise, he should.

EUNICE
Will Timocles sack great Persepolis?
Sooner I think Phraates will couch here,
The mighty, steadfast, patient, subtle man,
And from the loiterer take, the sensualist
Antioch of the Seleucidae.

THOAS
Perhaps.
But shall I rise against the country's laws
That harbours me? The sword I draw, is hers.
EUNICE
Are law and justice always one? Reflect.

THOAS
If justice is offended, I will strike.

He withdraws to another part of the hall.

EUNICE
The man is wise, but when ambition’s heaped
In a great bosom, Fate takes quickly fire.
It only needs the spark.

PHILOCTETES
Is it only that
That’s needed? there shall be the spark.

He withdraws.

EUNICE
Fate or else Chance
Work out the rest. I have given your powers a lead.

Nicanor, who has drawn near, stops before her.

NICANOR
Your council’s finished then?

EUNICE
What council, father?

NICANOR
I have seen, though I have not spoken. Meddle not
In things too great for you. This realm and nation
Are not a skein for weaving fine intrigues
In your shut chambers.

EUNICE
We have other sports.
What do you mean?
NICANOR

See less Antiochus.
Carry not there your daring spirit and free rein
To passion and ambition nor your bright scorn
Of every law that checks your headstrong will.
Or must I find a curb that shall restrain you?

He withdraws.

EUNICE

My prudent father! These men think that wisdom
Is tied up to beards. We too have heads
And finer brains within them, as I think!

She goes up on the dais. Leosthenes, Callicrates
and others enter together.

THOAS

Leosthenes from Parthia! Speeds the war?

LEOSTHENES

It waits a captain.

THOAS

It shall have today
A king of captains.

LEOSTHENES

I have seen the boy.
But there’s a mystery? Shall he be the king?

THOAS

If Fate agrees with Nature.

LEOSTHENES

Neither can err
So utterly, I think; for, if they could,
Man’s will would have a claim to unseat Fate,
Which cannot be.
Act III, Scene 1

Cleopatra enters with Antiochus and Timocles; Cleone, Rodogune in attendance, the latter richly robed.

PHILOCTETES
See where she places him!

THOAS
'Tis on her right!

PHAYLLUS
It is a woman’s ruse.
Or must I at disadvantage play the game
With this strong piece against?

CLEOPATRA
The strong Antiochus has gone too early
Down the dim gorges to that silent world
Where we must one day follow him. A younger hand
Takes up his sceptre and controls his sword.
These are the Syrian twins, Nicanor’s sons,
These are Antiochus and Timocles.
Why so long buried, why their right oppressed,
Why their precedence tyrannically concealed,
Forget. Forget old griefs, old hatreds; let them rest
Inurned, nor from their night recover them.

NICANOR
We need not raise the curtains that conceal
Things long inurned, but lest by this one doubt
The dead past lay a dark and heavy hand
Upon our fairer future, let us swear
The Queen shall be obeyed as if she spoke
For Heaven. Betwixt the all-seeing gods and her
Confine all cause of quarrel.
PHAYLLUS  
Let the princes swear;  
For how can subjects jar if they agree?

CLEOPATRA  
O not with oaths compel the Syrian blood!  
My sons, do you consent?

TIMOCLES  
Your sovereign will must rule,  
Mother, your children and our fraternal kindness  
Will drown the loser’s natural chagrin  
In joy at the other’s joy.

CLEOPATRA  
Antiochus, my son!

ANTIOCHUS  
Your question, Madam, was for Timocles;  
From me it needs no answer.

PHAYLLUS  
You accept  
Your mother’s choice?

ANTIOCHUS  
God’s choice. My mother speaks  
A thing concealed, not one unsettled.

PHAYLLUS  
Prince,  
Syria demands a plainer answer here.

ANTIOCHUS  
Who art thou? Art thou of Seleucus’ blood  
Who questionest Syria’s kings?
CLEOPATRA

Enough. My sons
Will know how to respect their kingly birth.
Today begins another era. Rise,
Princess of Parthia; sit upon this throne,
Phraates’ daughter; thou art peace and love
And must today be crowned. Marvel not, Syrians;
For it is peace my envoys bear by now
Upon their saddles to Persepolis.

THOAS
This was a secret haste!

LEOSTHENES
Is it possible?
We had our heel upon the Parthian’s throat.

CLEOPATRA
Since Parthia swept through the Iranian East
Wrecking the mighty Macedonian’s toil,
War sways for ever like a darkened sea
In turmoil twixt our realms. How many heart-strings
Have broken, what tears of anguish have been wept
And eyes sought eastward unreturning eyes!
Joy has been buried in the blood-drenched sands.
Vain blood, vain weeping! Earth was made so wide
That many might have majesty and joy
Upon one mother’s equal breast. But we
Arresting others’ portions lose our own.
Nations that conquer widest, perish first,
Sapped by the hate of an uneasy world.
Then they are wisest victors who in time
Knowing the limits of their prosperous fate
Avoid the violence of Heaven. Syrians,
After loud battles I have founded glorious peace.
That fair work I began as Syria’s queen;
To seal it Syria’s king must not refuse.
ANTIOCHUS
I do refuse it. There shall be no peace.

CLEOPATRA
My son!

ANTIOCHUS
Peace! Are the Parthians at our gates?
Has not alarm besieged Ecbatana?
When was it ever seen or heard till now
That victors sued for peace? And this the reason,
A woman’s reason, because many have bled
And more have wept. It is the tears, the blood
Prodigally spent that build a nation’s greatness.
I here annul this peace, this woman’s peace,
I will proclaim with noise of victories
Its revocation.

PHAYLLUS
Now!

THOAS
Thou speakest, King!

TIMOCLES
You are not crowned as yet, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
Syria forbids it, Syria’s destiny
Sends forth her lion voices from the hills
Where trumpets blare towards Persepolis,
Forbidding peace.

CLEOPATRA
We do not sue for peace,
My son, but give peace, taking provinces
And taking Rodogune.
TIMOCLES
Who twenty times
Outweighs all hero’s actions and exceeds
Earth’s widest conquests.

ANTIOCHUS
For her and provinces!
O worse disgrace! The sword had won us these.
We wrong the mighty dead who conquered. Provinces!
Whose soil are they that we must sue for them?
The princess! She’s my prisoner, is she not?
Must I entreat the baffled Parthian then
What I shall do with my own slave-girl here
In Antioch, in my palace? Queen of Syria,
This was ignobly done.

CLEOPATRA
I know you do not love me; in your cold heart
Love finds no home; but still I am your mother.
You will respect me thus when you are king?

ANTIOCHUS
I will respect you in your place, enshrined
In your apartments, governing your women,
Not Syria.

CLEOPATRA
Leave it. You will not think of peace?

ANTIOCHUS
Yes, when our armies reach Persepolis.

MELITUS
How desperate looks the Queen! What comes of this?

NICANOR (who has been watching Eunice)
End this debate; let Syria know her king.

Cleopatra rises and stands silent for a moment.
TIMOCLES
Mother!

CLEOPATRA
Behold your king!

MENTHO
She has done it, gods!
There is an astonished silence.

NICANOR
Speak once more, daughter of high Ptolemy,
Remembering God. Speak, have we understood?
Is Timocles our king?

CLEOPATRA (with a mechanical and rigid gesture)
Behold your king!
Nicanor makes a motion of assent as to the accomplished fact.

NICANOR
Let then the King ascend his throne.

LEOSTHENES (half-rising)
Thoas!

PHILOCTETES
Speak, King Antiochus, God’s chosen king
Who art, not Cleopatra’s.

THOAS
Speak, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
Why didst thou give to me alone the name
Of Syria’s princes? why upon thy right
Hast seated me? or wherefore mad’st thou terms
For that near time when I should be the king,
Chaffering for my consent with arguments
Unneeded if the younger were preferred?
Wilt thou invoke the gods to seal this lie?

**CLEOPATRA**
Dost thou insult me thus before my world?
Ascend the throne, my son.

**ANTIOCHUS**
Stay, Timocles.
Make not such haste, my brother, to supplant
Thy elder.

**TIMOCLES**
My elder?

*He looks at Cleopatra.*

**CLEOPATRA**
I have spoken the truth.

**MENTHO**
Thou hast not; thou art delivered of a lie,
A monstrous lie.

**CLEONE**
Silence, thou swarthy slave!

**MENTHO**
I'll not be silent. She offends the gods.
I am Mentho the Egyptian, she who saw
The royal children born. She lies to you,
O Syrians. Royal young Antiochus
Was first on earth.

**THOAS**
The truth breaks out at last.
PHAYLLUS
This is a slave the surplus mud of Nile
Engendered. Shall we wrong the Queen by hearing her?

MENTHO
I was a noble Egyptian’s wife in Memphis,
No slave, thou Syrian mongrel, and my word
May stand against a perjured queen’s.

EUNICE (leaning forward)  Is’t done?
Nicanor who has been hesitating, observes
her action and stands forward to speak.

NICANOR
The royal blood of Egypt cannot lie.
Shall Syria’s queen be questioned? Shall common words
Of common men be weighed against the breath of kings?
Let not wild strife arise, O princes, let it not.
Antiochus, renounce unfilial pride;
Wound not thy mother and thy motherland,
Son of Nicanor.

THOAS
Shall a lie prevail?

NICANOR (looking again at Eunice)
It was settled then among you! Be it so.
My sword is bare. I stand for Syria’s king.

PHILOCTETES (in the midst of a general hesitation)
Egyptian Philoctetes takes thy challenge,
Nicanor.

ANTIOCHUS
Who is for me in Syria?
Act III, Scene 1

THOAS

I set my sword
Against Nicanor's.

LEOSTHENES

I am Leosthenes.
I draw my victor steel for King Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS

Who else for me?

OTHERS

I! I! and I! and I!

CALLICRATES AND OTHERS

We for King Timocles.

LEOSTHENES

Slay them, cut down
The party of the liars.

There is a shouting and tumult with
drawing and movement of swords.

NICANOR

Protect the King.
Let insolent revolt at once be quenched
And sink in its own blood.

LEOSTHENES

I slay all strife
With the usurper.

THOAS

Stay, stay, Leosthenes.

ANTIOCHUS

Forbear! forbear, I say! let all be still!
The great Seleucus’ house shall not be made
A shambles. Not by vulgar riot, not
By fratricidal murder will I climb
Into my throne, but up the heroic steps
Of ordered battle. Brother Timocles,
That oft-kissed head is sacred from my sword.
Nicanor, thou hast thrown the challenge down;
I lift it up.

CLEOPATRA
O, hear me, son Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
I have renounced thee for my mother.

RODOGUNE
Alas!

CLEOPATRA
O wretched woman!

RODOGUNE
She hurries out followed by Rodogune,
Eunice and Cleone.

NICANOR
Thou shalt not do this evil,
Though millions help thee.

PHILOCTETES
Can we hold the house
And seize the city? We are many here.

THOAS
Nicanor’s troops hold Antioch.
Act III, Scene 1

LEOSTHENES
Not here, not here.
Out to the army on the marches! There
Is Syria’s throne, not here in Antioch.

ANTIOCHUS
Mentho,
Go with us. Gather swiftly all our strength,
Then out to Parthia!
Scene 2

A hall in the Palace.
Rodoquine, Eunice.

RODOGUNE
God gave my heart and mind; they are not hers
To force into this vile adultery.
I am a Parthian princess, of a race
Who choose one lord and cleave to him for ever
Through death, through fire, through swords, in hell, in heaven.

EUNICE
The Queen’s too broken. It was Phayllus said it.
He has leaped into the saddle of affairs
And is already master. What can we hope for
Left captive in such hands? Not Syria’s throne
Shall you ascend beside your chosen lord,
But as a slave the bed of Timocles.

RODOGUNE
If we remain! But who remains to die?
In Parthian deserts, in Antiochus’ tents!
There we can smile at danger.

EUNICE
Yes, oh, yes!
Deserts for us are safe, not Antioch. Come.

ANTIOCHUS
I sought for you, Eunice, Rodoquine.
To saddle! for our bridal pomp and torches
Are other than we looked for.

Phayllus enters from within with Theras.

PHAYLLUS

Today, no later.
The Egyptian rebel ravishes our queen!
Help! help!

ANTIOCHUS

Off, Syrian weasel!

He flings off Phayllus and goes out with
Eunice, Rodogune, Philoctetes.

PHAYLLUS

Theras, pursue them!

Theras hastens out; Phayllus rushes to the window.
Antiochus escapes! Oppose him, sentinels.
A thousand pieces for his head! He’s through.
O for a speedy arrow!

Timocles enters with Cleone.

TIMOCLES

Who escapes?

PHAYLLUS

Thy brother, forcing with him Rodogune,
And with them fled Eunice.

TIMOCLES

Rogune!

PHAYLLUS

By force he carried her.

TIMOCLES

O no, she went
Smiling and glad. O thou unwise Phayllus,
Why dost thou stay with me, a man that’s doomed?
He will come back and mount his father’s throne
And rule the nations. Why wouldst thou be slain?
All, all’s for him and ever was. I have had
Light loves, light friends, but no one ever loved me
Whom I desired. So was it in our boyhood’s days,
So it persists. He is preferred in heaven
And earth is his and his humanity.
Even my own mother is a Niobe
Because he has renounced her.

Phayllus
I understand,
Seeing this, the reason.

Timocles
Why should he always have the things I prize?
What is his friendship but a selfish need
Of souls to unbosom himself to, who will share,
Mirror and serve his greatness? Yet it was he
The clear discerning Philoctetes chose;
Upon his shoulder leaned my royal uncle
Preferring him to admonish and to love;
On me he only smiled as one too light
For praise or censure. What’s his kinglyness
But a lust of grandiose slaughter, an ambition
Almost inhuman and a haughty mind
That lifts itself above the highest heads
As if his mortal body held a god
And all were mean to him? Yet proudest men,
Thoas, Theramenes, Leosthenes,
Become unasked his servants. What’s his love?
A despot’s sensual longing for a slave,
Carnal, imperious, harsh, without respect,
The hunger of the vital self, not raised,
Refined, uplifted to the yearning heart.
Yet Rodogune, my Rodogune to him
Has offered up her moonlit purity,
Her secret need of sweetness. O she has
Unveiled to him her sweet proud heart of love.
She would not look at me who worshipped her.
You too, Phayllus, go, Cleone, go
And serve him in his tents: the future’s there,
Not on this brittle throne with which the gods
In idle sport have mocked me.

PHAYLLUS

There must be a man
Somewhere within this!

CLEONE

You shall not speak so to him.
Look round, King Timocles, and see how many
Prefer you to your brother. I am yours,
Phayllus works for you, princely Nicanor
Protects you, famed Callicrates supports.
Your mother only weeps in fear for you,
Not passion for your brother.

TIMOCLES

Rodogune
Has left me.

PHAYLLUS

We will have her back. Today
Began, today shall end this rash revolt.
Rise up, King Timocles, and be thyself,
Possess thy throne, recover Rodogune.

TIMOCLES

I cannot live unless you bring her back.

PHAYLLUS

That is already seen to. My couriers ride
Before them to Thrasyllus on the hills.
Their flight will founder there.

TIMOCLES

O subtle, quick
And provident Phayllus! Thou, thou, deviser,
Art the sole minister for me. Cleone,
The gods have made thee wholly beautiful
That thou mightst love me.

He goes out with Cleone.

PHAYLLUS

Minister! That’s something,
Not all I work for.
(to Theras who enters)
Well?

THERAS

He has escaped.
Your throw this time was bungled, Chancellor.

PHAYLLUS
I saw his rapid flight; but afterwards?

THERAS
The band of Syrian Phliaps kept the gates.
We shouted loud, but he more quick, more high,
Like some clear-voiced Tyrrenian trumpet cried,
“Syrians, I am your king,” and they at once,
“Hail, glorious King!” and followed at his word,
Galloping, till on the Orient road they seemed
Like specks on a white ribbon.

PHAYLLUS
Let them go.
There’s yet Thrasyllus. Or if he returns,
Though gods should help, though victory march his friend,
I am here to meet him.
Scene 3

Under the Syrian hills.
Antiochus, his generals, soldiers; Eunice, Rodogune, Mentho.

ANTIOCHUS
What god has moved them from their passes sheer
Where they were safe from me?

THOAS
They have had word,
No doubt, to take us living.

LEOSTHENES
On!

THOAS
They are
Three thousand, we six hundred arméd men.
Shall we go forward?

LEOSTHENES
Onward, still, I say!

ANTIOCHUS
Yes, on! I turn not back lest my proud Fate
Avert her eyes from me. A hundred guard
The princesses.

He goes, followed by Thoas,
Leosthenes, Philoctetes.

EUNICE
He’ll break them like sea-spray;
They shall not stand before him.

RODOGUNE
You missioned angels, guard Antiochus.  

As she speaks, the Eremite enters and regards her.

EUNICE
He is through them, he is through them! How they scatter Before his sword! My warrior!

RODOGUNE
Who is this man, Eunice? He is terrible to me.

EREMITE
Who art thou rather, born to be a torch To kingdoms? Is not thy beauty, rightly seen, More terrible to men than monstrous forms Which only frighten?

EUNICE
What if kingdoms burn, So they burn grandly?

EREMITE
Spirits like thine think so. Princess of Antioch, hast thou left thy father To follow younger eyes? Alas, thou knowst not Where they shall lead thee! It is to gates accursed And by a dolorous journey.

EUNICE
Beyond all portals I'd follow! I am a woman of the Greeks Who fear not death nor hell.

Antiochus returns.
Act III, Scene 3

ANTIOCHUS
Our swords have hewn
A road for us. Who is this flamen?

EREMITE
Hail!
“Rejoice” I cannot say, but greet Antiochus
Who never shall be king.

ANTIOCHUS
Who art thou, speak,
Who barst with such ill-omened words my way
Discouraging new-born victory? What thou knowest,
Declare! Curb not thy speech. I have a mind
Stronger than omens.

EREMITE
I am the appointed voice
Who come to tell thee thou shalt not be king,
But at thy end shall yield to destiny
For all thy greatness, genius, pride and force
Even as the tree that falls. March then no farther,
For in thy path Fate hostile stands.

ANTIOCHUS
If Fate
Would have me yield, let her first break me. On!

EREMITE
The guardians of the path then wait for thee
Vigilant lest the world’s destiny be foiled
By human greatness. March on to thy doom.

ANTIOCHUS
I will. Straight on, whatever doom it be!
EREomite
Farewell, thou mighty Syrian, soul misled,
Strength born untimely! We shall meet again
When death shall lead thee into Antioch.

He goes.

ANTIOCHUS
March.
Act IV

*The Palace in Antioch. Before the hills.*

Scene 1

*Cleopatra’s chamber.*
*Cleopatra, Zoyle.*

CLEOPATRA
Will he not come this morning? How my head aches!
Zoyle, smooth the pain out of it, my girl,
With your deft fingers. Oh, he lingers, lingers!
Cleone keeps him still, the rosy harlot
Who rules him now. She is grown a queen and reigns
Insulting me in my own palace. Yes,
He’s happy in her arms; why should he care for me
Who am only his mother?

ZOYLE
Is the pain less at all?

CLEOPATRA
O, it goes deeper, deeper. Ever new revels,
While still the clang of fratricidal war
Treads nearer to his palace. Zoyle,
You saw him with Cleone in the groves
That night of revel?

ZOYLE
So I told you, madam.
It is long since Daphne’s groves have gleamed so bright
Or trembled to such music.

CLEOPATRA

They were together?

ZOÝLA

Oh, constantly. One does not see such lovers.

CLEOPATRA (shaking her off)

Go!

ZOÝLA

Madam?

CLEOPATRA

Thy touch is not like Rodogune’s
Nor did her gentle voice offend me. Eunice,

Zoýla retires.

Why hast thou left me, cruel cold Eunice?

She walks to the window and returns swiftly.

God’s spaces frighten me. I am so lonely
In this great crowded palace.

Timocles enters the room reading a despatch.

TIMOCLES

He rushes onward like a god of war.
Mountains and streams and deserts waterless
Are grown our foes, his helpers. The gods give ground
Before his horse-hooves.
Millions of men arrayed in complete steel
Cannot restrain him. Almost we hear in Antioch
His trumpets now. Only Nicanor and the hills
Hardly protect my crown, my brittle crown!

CLEOPATRA

Antiochus comes!
TIMOCLES
The Macedonian legions
Linger somewhere upon the wide Aegean. Sea
And land contend against my monarchy.
Your brother sends no certain word.

CLEOPATRA
It will come.
Could not the Armenian helpers stay his course?
They came like locusts.

TIMOCLES
But are swept away
As with a wind. O mother, fatal mother,
Why did you keep me from the battle then?
My presence might have spurred men’s courage on
And turned this swallowing fate. It is alone
Your fault if I lose crown and life.

CLEOPATRA
My son!

TIMOCLES
There, mother, I have made you weep. I love you,
Dear mother, though I make you often weep.

CLEOPATRA
I have not blamed you, my sweet Timocles.
I did the wrong. Go to the field, dear son,
And show yourself to Syria. Timocles,
I mean no hurt, but now, only just now,
Would not a worthier presence at your side
Assist you? My royal brother of Macedon
Would give his child to you at my desire,
Or you might have your fair Egyptian cousin
Berenice. Syria would honour you, my son.
TIMOCLES
I know your meaning. You are so jealous, mother. Why do you hate Cleone, grudging me The solace of her love? I shall lose Syria And I have lost already Rodogune: Cleone clings to me. Nor is her heart Like yours, selfish and jealous.

CLEOPATRA
Timocles!

TIMOCLES (walking to the window)
O Rodogune, where hast thou taken those eyes, My moonlit midnight, where that wondrous hair In which I thought to live as in a cloud Of secret sweetness? Under the Syrian stars Somewhere thou liest in my brother’s arms, Thy pale sweet happy face upon his breast Smiling up to be kissed. O, it is hell, The thought is hell! At midnight in the silence I wake in warm Cleone’s rosy clasp To think of thee embraced; then in my blood A fratricidal horror works. Let it not be, You gods! Let me die first, let him be king. O mother, do not let us quarrel any more: Forgive me and forget.

CLEOPATRA
You go from me?

TIMOCLES
My heart is heavy. I will drink awhile And hear sweet harmonies.

CLEOPATRA
There in the hall And with Cleone?
TIMOCLES
Let it not anger you.
Yes, with Cleone.

He goes.

CLEOPATRA
I am alone, so terribly alone!
Scene 2

A hall in the Palace.
Phayllus, Theras.

Theras
His fortune holds.

Phayllus
He has won great victories
And stridden exultant like a god of death
Over Grecian, Syrian and Armenian slain;
But being mortal at each step has lost
A little blood. His veins are empty now.
Where will he get new armies? His small force
May beat Nicanor’s large one, even reach Antioch,
To find the Macedonian there. They have landed.
He is ours, Theras, this great god of tempest,
Our captive whom he threatens, doomed to death
While he yet conquers.

Timocles enters with Cleone, then the
musicians and dancing-girls.

Timocles
Bring in the wine and flowers; sit down, sit down.
Call in the dancers. Through the Coan robes
Let their bright flashing limbs assault my eyes
Capturing the hours, imprisoning my heart
In a white whirl of movement. Sit, Cleone.
Here on my breast, against my shoulder! You rose
Petalled and armed, you burden of white limbs
Made to be kissed and handled, you Cleone!
Yes, let the world be flowers and flowers our crown
With rosy linkings red as our own hearts
Of passion. O wasp soft-settling, poignant, sting,
Sting me with bliss until I die of it.

PHAYLLUS
I do not like this violence. Theras, go.

THERAS leaves the hall.

TIMOCLES
Drink, brother Phayllus. Your webs will glitter more brightly,
You male Arachne.
More wine! I'll float my heart out in the wine
And pour all on the ground to naked Eros
As a libation. I will hide my heart
In roses, I will smother thought with jonquils.
Sing, someone to me! sing of flowers, sing mere
Delight to me far from this troubled world.

Song
Will you bring cold gems to crown me,
Child of light?
Rather quick from breathing closes
Bring me sunlight, myrtles, roses,
Robe me in delight.
Give me rapture for my dress,
For its girdle happiness.

TIMOCLES
Closer, Cleone; pack honey into a kiss.
Another song! you dark-browed Syrian there!

Song
Wilt thou snare Love with rosy brightness
To make him stay with thee?
The petulant child of a fair, cruel mother,
He flees from me to crown another.
O misery!
Love cannot be snared, love cannot be shared;
Light love ends wretchedly.
TIMOCLES
Remove these wine-cups! tear these roses down!
Who snared me with these bonds? Take hence, thou harlot,
Thy rose-faced beauty! Thou art not Rodogune.

CLEONE
What is this madness?

TIMOCLES
Hence! leave me! I am sick
Of thy gold and roses.

PHAYLLUS
Go, women, from the room;
The King is ill. Go, girl, leave him to me.
All go, Cleone reluctantly, leaving
Phayllus with Timocles.

TIMOCLES
I will not bear it any more. Give me my love
Or let me die.

PHAYLLUS
In a few nights from this
Thou shalt embrace her.

TIMOCLES
Silence! It was not I.
What have I said? It was the wine that spoke.
Look not upon me with those eyes of thine.

PHAYLLUS
The wine or some more deep insurgent spirit
Burns in thy blood. Thou shalt clasp Rodogune.

TIMOCLES
Thy words, thy looks appal me. She’s my brother’s wife
Sacred to me.
PHAYLLUS

His wife? Who wedded them?
For not in camps and deserts Syria’s kings
Accomplish wedlock. She’s his concubine.
Slave-girl she is and bed-mate of thy brother
And may be thine. Or if she were his soul-close wife,
Death rends all ties.

TIMOCLES

I will not shed his blood.
Silence, thou tempter! he is sacred to me.

PHAYLLUS

Thou needst not stain thy hands, King Timocles.
Be he live flesh or carrion, she is thine.

TIMOCLES

Yet has she lain between my brother’s arms.

PHAYLLUS

What if she were thy sister, should that bar thee
From satisfaction of thy heart and body?

TIMOCLES

Do you not tremble when you say such things?

PHAYLLUS

We have outgrown these thoughts of children, king:
Nor gods nor ghosts can frighten us. You shake
At phantoms of opinion or you feign
To start at such, forgetting what you are.
The royal house of Egypt heeds them not,
Where you were nursed. Your mother sprang from incest.
If in this life you lose your Rodogune,
Are others left where you may have her bliss?
Your brother thought not so, but took her here.
TIMOCLES
I'll not be tempted by thee.

PHAYLLUS
No, by thyself
Be tempted and the thought of Rodogune.
Or shall we leave her to her present joys?
Perhaps she sleeps yet by Antiochus
Or held by him to sweeter vigilance —

TIMOCLES (furiously)
Accursèd ruffian, give her to my arms.
Use fair means or use foul, use steel, use poison,
But free me from these inner torments.

PHAYLLUS
From more
Than passion's injuries. Trust thy fate to me
Who am its guardian.

He goes out.

TIMOCLES
I am afraid, afraid!
What furies out of hell have I aroused
Within, without me? Let them do their will.
For I must have her once between my arms,
Though Heaven leap down in lightnings.
Scene 3

*Before the Syrian hills. Antiochus’ tent.*
*Antiochus, Thoas, Leosthenes, Philoctetes.*

**PHILOCTETES**
This is Phayllus’ work, the Syrian mongrel.
Who could have thought he’d raise against us Greece
And half this Asia?

**ANTIOCHUS**
He has a brain.

**THOAS**
We feel it.
This fight’s our latest and one desperate chance
Still smiles upon our fate.

**ANTIOCHUS**
Nicanor yields it us
Scattering his armies; for if we can seize
Before he gathers in his distant strengths
This middle pass, Antioch comes with it. So
I find it best and think the gods do well
Who put before us one decisive choice
Not lingering out their vote in balanced urns,
Not tediously delaying strenuous fate, —
Either to conquer with one lion leap
Or end in glorious battle.

**THOAS**
We ask no better;
With you to triumph or die beside you taking
The din of joyous battle in our ears,
Following your steps into whatever world.

PHILOCTETES
Have we not strength enough to enforce retreat
Like our forefathers through the Asian vasts
To Susa or the desert or the sea
Or Ptolemy in Egypt, — thence returning
With force of foreign levies, if Phayllus
Draw even the distant Roman over here,
Dispute with him the world?

ANTIOCHUS
No, Philoctetes.
With native swords I sought my native crown,
Which if I win not upon Syria’s hills
A hero’s death is mine. Make battle ready.
Our bodies are the dice we throw again
On the gods’ table.
Scene 4

*The same.*

*Antiochus, Eunice, Rodogune.*

**ANTIOCHUS**

I put my hand on Antioch. Thou hast done well,
O admirable quick Theramenes.
This fight was lionlike.

**EUNICE**

And like the lion
Thou art, my warrior, thou canst now descend
Upon Seleucus’ city. How new 'twill seem
After the mountains and the starlit skies
To sleep once more in Antioch!

**RODOGUNE**

I trust the stars
And mountains better. They were kind to me.
My blood within me chills when I look forward
And think of Antioch.

**ANTIOCHUS**

These are the shadows from a clouded past
Which shall not be repeated, Rodogune.
This is not Antioch that thou knewst, the prison
Of thy captivity, thou enterest now,
Not Antioch of thy foes, but a new city
And thy own kingdom.

**RODOGUNE**

Are the gods so good?
ANTIOCHUS
The gods are strong; they love to test our strength
Like armourers hammering steel. Therefore 'twas said
That they are jealous. No, but high and stern
Demanding greatness from the great; they strike
At every fault they see, perfect themselves
Labour at our perfection. What rumour increases
Approaching from the mountains? Thoas, thou?

Thoas enters.

Thy brow is dark. Is it Theramenes?
Returns our fortune broken?

THOAS
Broken and fallen.
We who are left bring back Theramenes
Upon whose body twenty glorious wounds
Smile at defeat.

ANTIOCHUS
Theramenes before me!
How have you kept me lying in my tent!
I thought our road was clear of foemen.

THOAS
The gods
Had other resources that we knew not of.
Within the passes, on the summit couch
The spears of Macedon. They have arrived
From the sea, from Antioch.

ANTIOCHUS
The Macedonians! Then
Our day is ended; we must think of night.
We reach our limit, Thoas.

THOAS
That’s if we choose;
For there are other tidings.

**ANTIOCHUS**

They should be welcome.

**THOAS**

Phraates, thy imperial father, comes
With myriad hosts behind him thunder-hooved,
Not for invasion armed as Syria’s foe,
But for the husband of his Rodogune.
Shall we recoil upon these helpers? Death
Can always wait.

**ANTIOCHUS**

Perhaps. Leave me awhile,
Thoas; for we must sit alone tonight,
My soul and I together. Rodogune,

*Thoas goes.*

Wouldst thou go back to Parthia, to thy country?

**RODOGUNE**

I have no country, I have only thee.
I shall be where thou art; it is all I know
And all I wish for.

**ANTIOCHUS**

Eunice, wilt thou go
To Antioch safe? My mother loves thee well.

**EUNICE**

I follow her and thee. What talk is this?
I shall grow angry.

**ANTIOCHUS**

Am I other, Eunice,
Than once I was? Is there a change in me
Since first I came into your lives from Egypt?
EUNICE
You are my god, my warrior and the same
You ever were.

ANTIOCHUS
To her and thee I am.
Sleep well, my Rodogune, for thou and I,
Not sure of Fate, are of each other sure.
To thee what else can matter?

RODOGUNE
Nothing else.

RODOGUNE and Eunice enter the
interior of the tent.

ANTIOCHUS
A god! Yes, I have godlike stirrings in me.
Shall they be bounded by this petty world
The sea can span? If Rome, Greece, Africa,
Asia and all the undiscovered globe
Were given me for my garden, all glory mine,
All men my friends, all women's hearts my own,
Would there not still be bounds, still continents
Unvanquished? O thou glorious Macedonian,
Thou too must seek at last more worlds to conquer.
Hast thou discovered them?
This earth is but a hillock when all's said,
The sea an azure puddle. All tonight
Seems strange to me; my wars, ambition, fate
And what I am and what I might have been,
Float round me vaguely and withdraw from me
Like grandiose phantoms in a mist. Who am I?
Whence come I? Whither go, or wherefore now?
Who gave me these gigantic appetites
That make a banquet of the world? who set
These narrow, scornful and exiguous bounds
To my achievement? O, to die, to pass,
Nothing achieved but this, “He tried great things,  
Accomplished small ones.” If this life alone  
Be given us to fail or to succeed,  
Then ’tis worth keeping.

The Parthian treads our land!  
Phraates’ hooves dig Grecian soil once more!  
The subtle Parthian! He has smiled and waited  
Till we were weak with mutual wounds and now  
Stretches his foot towards Syria. Have I then  
Achieved this only, my country’s servitude?  
Shall that be said of me? It galls, it stabs.  
My fame! “Destroyer of Syria, he undid  
The great Seleucus’ work.” Whatever else  
O’ertake me, in this the strong gods shall not win.  
I will give up my body and sword to Timocles,  
Repel the Parthian, save from this new death,  
These dangerous allies from Macedon  
Syria, then die.  
But wherefore die? Should I not rather go  
With my sole sword into the changeful world,  
Create an empire, not inherit one?  
Are there not other realms? has not the East  
Great spaces? In huge torrid Africa  
Beyond the mystic sources of the Nile  
There must be empires. Or if with a ship  
One sailed for ever through the infinite West,  
Through Ocean and still Ocean for three years,  
Might not one find the old Atlantic realms  
No fable? Thy narrow lovely littoral,  
O blue Mediterranean, India, Parthia,  
Is this the world? I thirst for mightier things  
Than earth has.  

But for what I dreamed, to bound  
Upon Nicanor through the deep-bellied passes  
Or fall upon the Macedonian spears,  
It were glorious, yet a glorious cowardice,  
Too like self-slaughter. Is it not more heroic
To battle with than to accept calamity?
Unless indeed all thinking-out is vain
And Fate our only mover. Seek it out, my soul,
And make no error here; for on this hour
The future of the man Antiochus,
What future he may have upon the earth
In name or body lies. Reveal it to me, Zeus!
In Antioch or upon the Grecian spears,
Where lies my fate?

While he is speaking, the Eremite enters.

EREomite
Before thee always.

ANTIOCHUS
How
Cam’st thou or whence? I know thy ominous look.

EREomite
The how inquire not nor the whence, but learn
The end is near which I then promised thee.

ANTIOCHUS
So then, defeat and death were from the first
My portion! Wherefore were these thoughts gigantical
With which I came into my mother ready-shaped
If they must end in the inglorious tomb?

EREomite
Despise not proud defeat, scorn not high death.
The gods accept them sternly.

ANTIOCHUS
Yes, as I shall,
But not submissively.
Act IV, Scene 4

EREMITE

Break then, thou hill
Unsatisfied with thy own height. The gods
Care not if thou resist or if thou yield;
They do their work with mortals. To the Vast
Whence thou, O ravening, strong and hungry lion,
Overleaping cam’st the iron bars of Time,
Return! thou hast thy tamers. God of battles!
Son of Nicanor! strong Antiochus!
Depart and be as if thou wert not born.
The gods await thee in Antioch.

He departs.

ANTIOCHUS

I will meet them there.

Break me. I see you can, O gods. But you break
A body, not this soul; for that belongs, I feel,
To other masters. It is settled then.
Tomorrow sets in Antioch.
Scene 5

The same.
_Philoctetes, Thoas, Leosthenes, Eunice._

_LEOSTHENES_
Surely this is the change that comes on men
Who are to die.

_PHIOCTETES_
O me! it is, it is.

_THOAS_
Princess Eunice, what think you of it?

_EUNICE_
Thoas, what matters what we think? We follow
Our king; it is his to choose our paths for us.
Lead they to death? Then we can die with him.

_THOAS_
That's nobly spoken.

_PHIOCTETES_
But too like a woman.

_Antiochus enters with Rodogune._

_ANTIOCHUS_
To Antioch! Is all ready for our march?

_PHIOCTETES_
Antiochus, my king, I think in Egypt
We loved each other.
ANTIOCHUS

Less here, my Philoctetes?

PHILOCTETES

Then by that love, dear friend, go not to Antioch. Let us await the Parthian in his march. What do you seek at Antioch? A mother angry? A jealous brother at whose ear a fatal knave Sits always whispering? lords inimical? What can you hope from these? Go not to Antioch. I see Death smiling, waving you to go, But do not.

ANTIOCHUS

Dearest comrade, Philoctetes, Fate calls to me and shall I shrink from her? I know my little brother Timocles, I feel his clasp already, see his smile. But there’s Phayllus! Shall I fall so low As to fear him? Forgive me, friend; I go to Antioch.

PHILOCTETES

It was decreed!

ANTIOCHUS

But you, my friends, who have no love To shield you and perhaps great enemies, Will you fall back until I make your peace, To Egypt or Phraates?

THOAS

Not a man Will leave your side who followed your victorious sword. We follow always.

ANTIOCHUS

Beat then the drums and march.
But let an envoy ride in front to Timocles
And tell him that Antiochus comes to lay
His victor sword between a brother’s knees
And fight for him with Parthia. Let us march.

All go except Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES (looking after him)
O sun, thou goest rushing to the night
Which shall engulf thee!
Act V

*The Palace in Antioch.*

Scene 1

*A hall in the Palace.*

Phayllus, alone.

**Phayllus**

My brain has loosened harder knots than this. Timocles gets by this his Rodogune; That’s one thing gained. Tonight or else tomorrow I’ll have her in his bed though I have to hale her Stumbling to it through her own husband’s blood. For he must die. He is too great a man To be a subject: nor is that his intention Who hides some subtler purpose. Exile would free him For more stupendous mischief. Death! But how? There is this Syrian people, there is Timocles Whose light unstable mind like a pale leaf Trembles, desires, resolves, renounces.

*Timocles enters.*

**Timocles**

Phayllus,

It is the high gods bring about this good. My great high brother, strong Antiochus To come and kneel to me! No hatred more! He is the brother whom I loved in Egypt.
PHAYLLUS
Oh, wilt thou always be, thou shapeless soul,
Clay for each passing circumstance to alter?

TIMOCLES
Do you not think I have only now to ask
And he will give me Rodogune? She’s not his wife!
Cast always together in the lonely desert,
Long nearness must have wearied him of her;
For he was never a lover. O Phayllus,
When so much has been brought about, will you tell me
This will not happen too? I am sure the gods
Intend this.

PHAYLLUS
So you think Antiochus comes
To lay his lofty head below your foot?
You can believe it! Truly, if you think that,
There’s nothing left that cannot be believed.
This soul that dreamed of conquests at its birth,
This strong overweening swift ambitious man
Whom victory disappoints, to whom continents
Seem narrow, will submit, you say,—to you?
You’ll keep him for your servant?

TIMOCLES
What is it you hint?
Stroke not your chin! Speak plainly. Do you know,
I sometimes hate you!

PHAYLLUS
I care not, if you hear me
And let me guard you from your enemies.

TIMOCLES
I know you love me, but your thoughts are evil
To every other and your ways are worse.
Yet speak; what is it you fear?

PHAYLLUS

Yet this seems probable that having failed
By violent battle he is creeping in
To slay you silently. You smile at that?
It is the commonest rule of statesmanship
And History’s strewn with instances. Believe it not;
Believe your wishes, not mankind’s record;
Slumber till with the sword in you you wake
And he assumes your purple.

TIMOCLES (indifferently)
I hear, Phayllus. Let him give me Rodogune
And all’s excused he has ever done to me.

PHAYLLUS
He will keep her and take all hearts besides
That ever loved you.

TIMOCLES (still indifferently)
I will see that first.

Cleopatra enters quickly.

CLEOPATRA
It is true, Timocles? It is even true!
Antiochus my son is coming to me,
Is coming to me!

TIMOCLES
Thus you love him still!

CLEOPATRA
He is my child, he has his father’s face.
And I shall have my Parthian Rodogune
With her sweet voice and gentle touch, and her,
My darling, my clear-eyed delight, Eunice,
And I shall not be lonely any more.
I have not been so happy since you came
From Egypt. But, O heaven! what followed that?
Will now no stark calamity arise
With Gorgon head to turn us into stone
Venging this glimpse of joy? Torn by your scourges
I fear you, gods, too much to trust your smile.

Nicanor enters.

NICANOR
Antiochus comes.

TIMOCLES
Hail, thou victorious captain,
Syria’s strong rescuer!

NICANOR
Syria’s rescuer comes,
Thy brother Antiochus who makes himself
A sword to smite thy dangerous enemies.

PHAYLLUS
You used not once to praise him so, Nicanor.

NICANOR
Because I knew not then his nobleness
Who had only seen his might.

PHAYLLUS
Yet had you promised
That if he entered Antioch, it would be chained
And naked, travelling to the pit or sword,
Nicanor.

NICANOR
He comes not as a prisoner,
But royally disdaining to enslave
For private ends his country to the Parthian.

TIMOCLES
Comes my dear brother soon?

NICANOR
Even at this moment
He enters.

TIMOCLES
Summon our court. Let all men’s eyes behold
This reconciliation. I shall see
Next moment Rodogune!

There enter from one side Callicrates, Melitus,
Cleone, courtiers; from the other Antiochus, Eunice,
Rodogune, Thoas, Leosthenes, Philoctetes.

O brother, in my arms! Let this firm clasp
Be sign of the recovered amity
That binds once more for joy Nicanor’s sons.

ANTIOCHUS
This is like thee, my brother Timocles.
Let all vain strife be banished from our souls.
My sword is thine, and I am thine and all
I have and love is thine, O Syrian Timocles,
Devoted to thy throne for Syria.

TIMOCLES
All?
Brother! O clasp me once again, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
The Syrian land once cleansed of foemen, rescued
From these fierce perils, I shall have thy leave,
Brother, to voyage into distant lands;
But not till I have seen your Antioch joys
Of which they told us, I and my dear wife,
The Parthian princess Rodogune. See, brother,
How all things work out by a higher will.
Thou hast the Syrian kingdom, I have her
And my own soul for monarchy.

TIMOCLES

His wife!

MELITUS
The King is pale and gnaws his nether lip.

ANTIOCHUS
Mother, I kneel to you; raise me this time
And I will not be froward.

CLEOPATRA
My child! my child!

TIMOCLES
He will not give me Rodogune! And now he’ll steal
My mother’s heart. Captains, I welcome you:
You are my soldiers now.

LEOSTHENES
We thank thee, King.
We are thy brother’s soldiers, therefore thine.

TIMOCLES
Yes! Philoctetes, old Egyptian friend,
You go not yet to Egypt?

PHILOCTETES
I know not where.
I have forgotten why I came from thence.
I hope that you will love your brother.
TIMOCLES            Him!
Oh yes, I'll love him.

ANTIOCHUS            Brother Timocles,
We have come far today; will you appoint us
Our chambers here?

TIMOCLES            I'll take you to them, brother.
_All leave the hall except Cleone and Phayllus._

CLEONE
Is this their peace? But he'll have Rodogune
And I shall like a common flower be thrown
Into the dust-heap.

PHAYLLUS
Pooh!

CLEONE            I have eyes; I see.
Even then I knew I would be nothing to you
Once you were seated. I'll not be flung away!
Beware, Phayllus; for Antiochus lives.

PHAYLLUS
Make change of lovers then with Rodogune
While yet he lives.

CLEONE            I might do even that.
He has a beautiful body like a god's.
I will not have him slain.
PHAYLLUS

You may be his widow
If you make haste in marrying him; for soon
He will be carrion.

Timocles returns.

TIMOCLES

I’d have a word with you,
Phayllus.

Cleone withdraws out of hearing.

Where will they put the Parthian Rodogune?

PHAYLLUS

Put her?

TIMOCLES

To sleep, dull ruffian! Her chamber! Where?

PHAYLLUS

Why, in one bed with Prince Antiochus.

TIMOCLES

Thou bitter traitor, dar’st thou say it too?
Art thou too leagued to slay me? Shall I bear it?
In my own palace! In one bed! O God!
I will go now and stab him through the heart
And drag her, drag her —

CLEONE (running to him)

The foam is on his lips!

PHAYLLUS

Restrain thy passions, King! He is transformed.
This is that curious devil, jealousy.
As if it mattered! He will have her soon.
TIMOCLES
Cleone, I thank you. When I think of this,
Something revolts within to strangle me
And tears my life out of my bosom. Phayllus,
You spoke of plots; where are they? Let me see them.

PHAYLLUS
That's hard. Are they not hidden in his breast?

TIMOCLES
Can you not tear them out?

PHAYLLUS
Torture your brother!

TIMOCLES
Torture his generals; let them howl their love for him!
Torture Eunice. Let truth come out twixt shrieks!
Number her words with gouts of blood!

PHAYLLUS
You'll hurt yourself.
Be calmer. Torture! To what purpose that?
It is not profitable.

TIMOCLES
I will have proofs.
Wilt thou thwart me, thou traitor, even thou?
Arrange his trial instantly, arrange
His exile.

PHAYLLUS
Exile! You might as well arrange
At once your ruin.

TIMOCLES
There shall be justice, justice.
Thou shalt be fairly judged, Antiochus.  
I will not slay him. Exile! And Rodogune  
With me in Antioch.

PHAYLLUS
Listen! the passing people sing his name.  
They’ll rise to rescue him and slay us all  
As dogs are killed in summer. Command his death:  
No man will rise for a dead carcase. Death,  
Not exile! He’ll return with Ptolemy  
Or great Phraates, take your Syria from you,  
Take Rodogune.

TIMOCLES
I give my power to you.  
Try him and sentence him. But execution,  
Let it be execution. I will have  
No murder done. Arrange it.

He goes out followed by Cleone.

PHAYLLUS
While he’s in the mood,  
It must be quickly done. But that’s to venture  
With no support in Syria when it’s done  
Except this brittle king. It matters not.  
Fortune will bear me out; she’s grown my slave-girl.  
What liberties have I not taken with her  
Which she has suffered amorously, kinder grown  
After each handling. Watch me, my only lover!  
Sudden and swift shall be Phayllus’ stroke.
Scene 2

Antiochus’ chamber.
Cleopatra, Antiochus, Eunice, Rodogune.

CLEOPATRA
Eunice, cruel, heartless, sweet Eunice,
How could you leave me?

EUNICE
Pardon me, dear lady.

ANTIOCHUS
Mine was the error, mother.

CLEOPATRA
O my son,
If you had said that “mother” to me then,
All this had never happened.

ANTIOCHUS
I have been hard
To you, my mother, you to me your son.
We have both erred and it may be the gods
Will punish our offences even yet.

CLEOPATRA
O, say not that, my child. We must be happy;
I will have just a little happiness.

RODOGUNE
O, answer her with kisses, dear Antiochus.
CLEOPATRA
Do you too plead for me, sweet Parthian?

EUNICE
Cousin Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
My heart is chastened and I love,
Mother, though even now I will not lie
And say I love you as a child might love
Who from his infancy had felt your clasp.
But, mother, give me time and if the gods
Will give it too, who knows? we may be happy.

Philoctetes enters.

PHILOCTETES
Pardon me, Madam, but my soul is harried
With fierce anxieties. You do not well
To linger with your son Antiochus.
A jealous anger works in Timocles
When he hears of it.

CLEOPATRA
Is’t possible?

PHILOCTETES
Fear it!
Believe it!

CLEOPATRA (shuddering)
I will not give the gods a handle.
But I may take Eunice and your wife
To comfort me a little?

ANTIOCHUS
Go with her,
Act V, Scene 2

Eunice. Leave me for an hour, my Rodogune.

All go from the chamber except Antiochus.

When, when will the gods strike? I feel the steps
Of Doom about me. Open thy barriers, Death;
I would not linger underneath the stroke.

Phayllus enters with soldiers.

PHAYLLUS
Seize him! This is the prince Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS
So soon! I said not farewell to my love.
Well, Syrian, dost thou carry only warrants
Or keeps the death-doom pace with thy arrest?

PHAYLLUS
Thy plots have been discovered, plotter.

ANTIOCHUS
Plots!
Vain subtle fool, I will not answer thee.
What matters the poor pretext? Guards, conduct me.

He goes out, guarded.

PHAYLLUS
Must thou be royal even in thy fall?
Scene 3

The same.
Eunice, Rodogune.

RODOGUNE
Will they not let me go and see him even?

EUNICE
We'll make our way to him and out for him
To Egypt, Egypt.

RODOGUNE
There's only one joy left,
To be with him whether we live or die.

EUNICE
You are too meek. Cleone helps us here
Whatever be the spring of her strange pity.
When we come back, Phyllus, we shall find out
Whether the ingenuity of men
Holds tortures huge enough for your deserts.

RODOGUNE
Why do you pace about with flaming eyes?
Be still and sit and put your hand in mine.

EUNICE
My Parthian sweetness! O, the gods are cruel
Who torture such a heart as thine.

RODOGUNE
Where is
My mother?

EUNICE
She is lying in her room
Dry-eyed and voiceless, gazing upon Fate
With eyes I dare not look at. Till tomorrow.
At dawn we'll have him out. Cleone bribes
The sentries; Thoas has horses and a ship
Wide-winged for Egypt, Egypt.

RODOGUNE
O yes, let us leave
Syria and cruel Antioch.

EUNICE
For a while.
I would have had him out tonight, my king,
But ruffian Theras keeps the watch till dawn.
How long will walls immure so huge a prisoner?
Trial! When he returns in arms from Egypt,
Try him, Phayllus. We must wait till dawn.

RODOGUNE
I shall behold him once again at dawn.
Scene 4

A guard-room in the Palace.
Antiochus, alone.

ANTIOCHUS
What were Death then but wider life than earth
Can give us in her clayey limits bound?
Darkness perhaps! There must be light behind.

As he speaks, Phayllus enters.

Who is it?

PHAYLLUS
Phayllus and thy conqueror.

ANTIOCHUS
In some strange warfare then!

PHAYLLUS
I came to see
Before thy end the greatness that thou wast;
For thou wert great as mortals measure. Thou hast
An hour to live.

ANTIOCHUS
Shorter were better.

PHAYLLUS
An hour!

It is strange. The beautiful strong Antiochus
In one brief hour and by a little stroke
Shall be mere rotten carrion for the flies
To buzz about.
ANTIOCHUS

Thinkest thou so, Phayllus?

PHAYLLUS

I know it, and in thy fall, because thou wert great,
I feel my greatness who am thy o’erthrower.
I long to probe the mightiness thou art
And know the thoughts that fill thee at this hour;
For it must come to me some day. The things
We are, do and are done to! Let it be.
Dost thou not ask to kiss thy wife? She’ld come,
Though she must leave thy brother’s bed for it.

ANTIOCHUS

What a poor lie, Phayllus, for the great man
Thou thinkst thyself!

PHAYLLUS

Thou knowst not then for her
Thou diest, that his hungry arms may clasp
Her warm sweet body thou hast loved to kiss?

ANTIOCHUS

So didst thou work it? Thou art a rare study,
Thou Graeco-Syrian.

PHAYLLUS

I am what my clay
Has made me. It does not hurt thee then to know
That while thou art dying, they are hard at work
Even now before thy kingly corpse is cold?

ANTIOCHUS

What a blind owl thou art that seest the sun
And thinkst it darkness! Hence! I weary of thee.
Thou art too shallow after all. Outside
Is it the dawn?
The dawn. Thou wak’st too early
For one who shall not sleep again.

Yes, sleep
I have done with; now for an immortal waking.

That dream of fools! Thou art another man
Than any I have seen and to my eyes
Thou seemst a grandiose lack-wit. Yet in defeat
I could not move thee. I have limits then?

Yes, didst thou think thyself a god in evil
And souls of men thy subjects? Leave me, send
Thy executioner. Let him be quick.
I wait!

I fear he still will loiter. Waiting
Was ever tedious to me: I will sleep.

Is this that other country? Theramenes
Before me smiling with his twenty wounds
And Mentho with the breasts that suckled me!
Who are these crowding after me so fast?
My mother follows me and cousin Eunice
Treads in her footsteps. Thou too, Timocles?
Thoas, Leosthenes and Philoctetes,
Good friends, will you stay long? The world grows empty.
Why, all that’s great in Syria staggers after me
Into blind Hades; I am royally
Attended.

Phayllus goes.

Theras enters.
THERAS
Phayllus’ will compels me to it,
Or else I do not like the thing I do.

ANTIOCHUS
Who is it? Thou art the instrument. Strike in.
Keep me not waiting. I ever loved proud swiftness
And thorough spirits.

THERAS
I must strike suddenly or never strike.

He strikes.

ANTIOCHUS
I pass the barrier.

THERAS
Will not this blood stop flowing?

ANTIOCHUS
The blood? Let the gods have it; ’tis their portion.

THERAS
A red libation, O thou royal sacrifice!
I have done evil. Will sly Phayllus help me?
He was a trickster ever. I have done evil.

ANTIOCHUS
Tell Parthian Rodogune I wait for her
Behind Death’s barrier.

THERAS
The world’s too still. Will he not speak again
Upon this other side of nothingness?
O sounds, sounds, sounds! The sentries change, I think.
I’ll draw thy curtains, O thou mighty sleeper.
He draws the curtains, extinguishes the light and goes out. All is still for a while, then the door opens again and Eunice and Rodogune enter.

**Eunice**
Tread lightly, for he sleeps. The curtain’s drawn.

**Rodozune**
O my Antiochus, on thy hard bed
In the rude camp with horses neighing round
Thou well mightst slumber nor the undistant trumpet
Startling unseal thy war-accustomed ears
From the sweet lethargy of earned repose.
But in the horrible silence of this prison
How canst thou sleep? It clamours in my brain
More than could any sound, with terror laden
And voices.

**Eunice**
I’ll wake him.

**Rodozune**
Do not. He is tired
And you will spoil his rest.

**Eunice**
He moves no more
Than the dead might.

**Rodozune**
Speak not of death, Eunice;
We are too near to death to speak of him.

**Eunice**
He must be waked. Cousin Antiochus,
You sleep too soundly for a prisoner. Wake!
RODOGUNE
There is some awful presence in this room.

EUNICE
I partly feel it. Wake, wake, Antiochus.
She draws apart the curtain and puts in her arm, then hastily withdraws it.

O God, what is this dabbles so my hand,
That feels almost like blood?
(tearing down the curtain)

Antiochus!
She falls half-swooned against the wall. There is a silence, then noise is heard in the corridors and the voice of Nicanor at the door.

NICANOR
Guard carefully the doors; let no evasion Deceive you.

RODOGUNE
Antiochus! Antiochus! Antiochus!

EUNICE
Call him not; he will wake
And Heaven be angry. O my Rodogune,
Let us too sleep.

RODOGUNE
Antiochus! Antiochus!
Nicanor enters armed with soldiers and lights.

NICANOR
Am I in time? Thou? thou? How cam’st thou here?
Who is this woman with the dreadful face?
Can this be Rodogune? Eunice, speak.
What is this blood upon thy hands and dress?
Thou dost not speak! Oh, speak!

EUNICE
I am going, I am going to my chamber
To sleep.

NICANOR
Arrest her, guards.

He approaches the bed and recoils.
Awake the house!

Sound the alarm! O palace of Nicanor,  
Thou canst stand yet upon thy stony base  
Untroubled! The warlike prince Antiochus  
Lies on this bed most treacherously murdered.

Cries and commotion outside.

Speak, wretched girl. What villain’s secret hand  
Profaned with death this royal sanctuary?  
How cam’st thou here or hast this blood on thee?

There enter in haste Callicrates, Melitus,  
Cleone; afterwards Phayllus and others.

CLEONE (to Nicanor)  
Thou couldst not save him then for all my warning?  
In vain didst thou mistrust me!

PHAYLLUS (entering)  
It is done. Yet Theras came not! Do I fail?  
Fortune, my kindly goddess, help me still  
In the storm I have yet to weather.

NICANOR  
Thou hast come!

This is thy work, thou ominous counsellor.

PHAYLLUS  
In all the land who dare impugn me, if it be?
NICANOR
Thou art a villain! Thou shalt die for this.

PHAYLLUS
One day I shall, for this or something else.
But here’s the King.

NICANOR
No more a king for me
Or Syria.

Timocles enters, followed by Cleopatra.

MELITUS
The Queen comes cold and white and shuddering.

CLEOPATRA (speaking with an unnatural calmness)
Why do these cries of terror shake the house
Repeating Murder and Antiochus?
Nicanor, lives my son?

NICANOR
Behold, O woman,
The frame you fashioned for Antiochus,
Cast from your love before, now cast from life,
By whose unnatural contrivance, let them say
Who did it.

CLEOPATRA
It is not true, it is not true!
There can be no such horror. O, for this,
For this you gave him back!

TIMOCLES
O gods! Phayllus,
I did not think that he would look like this.
MELITUS
Cover this death. It troubles the good King.

TIMOCLES (recovering himself)
This is a piteous sight, beloved mother;
Would that he lived and wore the Syrian crown
Unquestioned.

CLEOPATRA
Timocles, I will not credit
What yet a horror in my blood believes.
The eyes of all men charge you with this act;
Deny it!

TIMOCLES
Mother!

CLEOPATRA
Deny it!

TIMOCLES
Alas, mother!

CLEOPATRA
Deny it!

TIMOCLES
O mother, what shall I deny?
It had to be. Blame only the dire gods
And bronze Necessity.

CLEOPATRA
Call me not mother!
I have no children. I am punished, gods,
Who dared outlive my great unhappy husband
For this!

She rushes out.
Act V, Scene 4

NICANOR
Is this thy end, O great Seleucus?
What Fury rules thy house? The Queen is gone
With desperate eyes. Who next?

There enter in haste Philoctetes, Thoas, Leosthenes
and others of Antiochus’ party.

PHILOCTETES
It is true then,
It is most true! O high Antiochus,
How are thy royal vast imaginations
All spilt into a meagre stream of blood!
And yet thy eyes seem to gaze royally
Into death’s vaster realms as if they viewed
More conquests there and mightier monarchies.
When we were boys and slumber came with noon,
Often you’ld lay your head upon my knee
Even thus. O little friend Antiochus,
We are again in hundred-gated Thebes
And life is all before us.

THOAS
O insupportable!
Thou styled by men a king, no king of mine,
Acquit thyself of this too kindred blood.
No murderer sits in great Seleucus’ chair
Longer than takes the movement of my sword
Out of its scabbard. I live to ask this question.

LEOSTHENES
Nor think thy royal title nor thy guards
Shall fence thy life, thou crownèd fratricide,
Nor many ranks of triple-plated iron
Shut out swift vengeance.

PHILOCTETES
His eyes look up and seem to smile at me.
NICANOR
Thoas, thy anger ranges far too wide.
Respect the blood of kings, Leosthenes.

THOAS
See dabbled on this couch the blood of kings
Thus by a kindred blood respected.

TIMOCLES
The hearts
Of kings are not their own, nor yet their acts.
This was an execution, not a murder.
In better time and place you shall have proofs:
Phayllus knows it all. Be satisfied.
Lift up this royal dead. All hatred now
Forgotten, I will royally inter
His ashes guarding still his diadem
And sword and armour. All that most he loved
Shall go with him into the silent world.

RODOGUNE
I come.

TIMOCLES
The voice of Rodogune! That woman’s form
The shadowy anguished robe concealed! She here
Beside my brother!

NICANOR
We had forgotten how piteous was this scene.
O you who loved the dead, forbear a while;
All shall be sternly judged.

TIMOCLES
O Rodogune,
The dead demands thy grief, since he too loved thee,
But not in this red chamber pay thy debt,
Not in this square of horror. In thy calm room
Gently bedew his memory with tears
And I will help them with my own. Me too
He loved once.

LEOSTHENES
    Shall our swords yet sleep? He wooes
His brother's wife beside his brother's corpse
Whom he has murdered.

THOAS
    Yet, Leosthenes.
For Heaven has borne enough from him. At last
The gods lift up their secret thunderbolts
Above us.

NICANOR
    She totters and can hardly move.
Assist her or she falls.

PHILOCTETES (raising his head)
    O Rodogune,
What wilt thou with my dead?

PHAYLLUS
    Shall it be allowed?

TIMOCLES
I do not grudge this corpse her sad farewell.
O Rodogune, embrace the unresponsive dead;
But afterwards remember life and love
Are still on earth.

THOAS
    Afterwards, Timocles.
Give death a moment.

There is a silence while Rodogune bends
swaying over the dead Antiochus.
O my Rodogune,
Leave now the dead man’s side whose debt is paid.
Return to life, to love.

Rodogune (stretching out her arms)
My king! my king!
Leave me not, leave me not! I am behind thee.
She falls dead at the feet of Antiochus.

Eunice
O, take me also!
She rushes to Rodogune and throws herself on the dead bodies.

Nicanor
Raise the princess up;
She has swooned.

Thoas
Her heart has failed her: she is dead.

Timocles
Rise up, my Rodogune.

Thoas
She is dead, Timocles;
She’s safe from thee. Thou goest not alone,
My king, into the darkness.

Cleone
Look to the King!

Timocles (speaking with difficulty)
Lives she?

Melitus
No, she is dead, King Timocles.
Act V, Scene 4

CLEONE
Brother, the King!

Timocles has been tearing at the robe round his neck. Phayllus, Melitus and others crowd round to support him as he falls.

NICANOR
It is a fit at worst
Which anger and despair have forced him to.

PHAYLLUS
It is not death? I live then.

NICANOR
Death, thou intriguer!
Art thou not Death who with thy wicked promptings And poisonous whispers worked to dangerous rage The kindly moods of Timocles? Seize him, He shall atone this murder.

PHAYLLUS
You build too soon
Your throne upon these prostrate bodies. Your king Lives still, Nicanor.

NICANOR
Not to save thee from death, Nor any murderer. Drag him hence.

CLEONE
The King revives.
Save thyself, brother.

LEOSTHENES
Ten kings should not avail To save him.
NICANOR
Drag hence that subtle Satan.

TIMOCLES
I live
And I remember!

CLEONE
Sleepest thou, Phayllus?

PHAYLLUS
My king, they drag me hence to murder me.

TIMOCLES (*vaguely at first*)
Who art thou? Thou abhorred and crooked devil,
Thou art the cause that she is lost to me.
Slay him! And that shrewd-lipped, rose-tinted harlot,
Let her be banished somewhere from men’s sight
Where she can be forgotten. O brother, brother,
I have sent thee into the darkling shades,
Myself am barred the way.

PHAYLLUS
What I have done,
I did for this poor king and thankless man.
But there’s no use in talking. I am ready.

TIMOCLES (*half-rising, furiously*)
Slay him with tortures! let him feel his death
As he has made me feel my living.

NICANOR
Take him
And see this sentence ruthlessly performed
Upon this frame of evil. May the gods
In their just wrath with this be satisfied.
PHAYLLUS
And yet I loved thee, Timocles.

He is taken out, guarded.

NICANOR
Daughter,
Eunice, rise.

EUNICE
I did not know till now
Life was so difficult a thing to leave.
Her going was so easy!

NICANOR
Ah, girl, this tragic drama owns in part
Thy authorship! Henceforth be wise and humble.
To her chamber lead her.

EUNICE
Do with me what you will.
My heart has gone to journey with my dead.
O father, for a few days bear with me;
I do not think that I shall long displease you
Hereafter.

She goes, attended by Melitus.

NICANOR
Follow her, Callicrates,
And let no dangerous edge or lethal drink
Be near to her despair.

Callicrates follows.

THOAS
This cannot keep us
From those we loved.
NICANOR

Syrians, what yet remains
Of this storm-visited, bolt-shattered house
Let us rebuild, joining our strength to save
The threatened kingdom. For when this deed is known,
The Parthian lion leaps raging for blood
And Ptolemy’s dangerous grief for the boy he cherished
Darkens on us from Egypt. Syria beset
And we all broken!

TIMOCLES

Something has snapped in me
Physicians cannot bind. Thou, Prince Nicanor,
Art from the royal blood of Syria sprung
And in thy line Seleucus may descend
Untainted from his source. Brother, brother,
We did not dream that all would end like this,
When in the dawn or set we roamed at will
Playing together in Egyptian gardens,
Or in the orchards of great Ptolemy
Walked with our arms around each other’s necks
Twin-hearted. But now unto eternity
We are divided. I must live for ever
Unfriended, solitary in the shades;
But thou and she will lie at ease inarmed
Deep in the quiet happy asphodel
And hear the murmur of Elysian winds
While I walk lonely.

PHILOCTETES

We too without thee now
Breath-haunted corpses move, Antiochus.
Thou goest attended to a quiet air;
Doomed still to live we for a while remain
Expecting what the gods have yet in store.