

*Antony and Cleopatra – 1.2*

*[Enter CHARMIAN, IRAS, ALEXAS, and a Soothsayer]*

CHARMIAN            Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most any thing Alexas,  
                             almost most absolute Alexas, where's the soothsayer  
                             that you praised so to the queen

ALEXAS                Soothsayer!

Soothsayer            Your will?

CHARMIAN            Is this the man? Is't you, sir, that know things?

Soothsayer            In nature's infinite book of secrecy  
                             A little I can read.

ALEXAS                Show him your hand.

CHARMIAN            Good sir, give me good fortune.

Soothsayer            I make not, but foresee.

CHARMIAN            Pray, then, foresee me one.

Soothsayer            You shall be yet far fairer than you are.

CHARMIAN            He means in flesh.

IRAS                    No, you shall paint when you are old.

CHARMIAN            Wrinkles forbid!

ALEXAS                Vex not his prescience; be attentive.

CHARMIAN            Hush!

Soothsayer            You shall be more loving than beloved.

CHARMIAN            I had rather heat my liver with drinking.

ALEXAS                Nay, hear him.

CHARMIAN                    Good now, some excellent fortune! Let me be married  
to three kings in a forenoon, and widow them all.

Soothsayer                 You shall outlive the lady whom you serve.

CHARMIAN                    O excellent! I love long life better than figs.

Soothsayer                 You have seen and proved a fairer former fortune  
Than that which is to approach.

CHARMIAN                    Prithee, how many boys and wenches must I have?

Soothsayer                 If every of your wishes had a womb.  
And fertile every wish, a million.

CHARMIAN                    Out, fool! I forgive thee for a witch.

ALEXAS                      You think none but your sheets are privy to your wishes.

CHARMIAN                    Nay, come, tell Iras hers.

ALEXAS                      We'll know all our fortunes.  
Mine, and most of our fortunes, to-night, shall  
be--drunk to bed.

IRAS                         There's a palm presages chastity, if nothing else.

ALEXAS                      E'en as the o'erflowing Nilus presageth famine.

IRAS                         Go, you wild bedfellow, you cannot soothsay.

ALEXAS                      Prithee, tell her but a worky-day fortune.

Soothsayer                 Your fortunes are alike.

IRAS                         But how, but how? Give me particulars.

Soothsayer                 I have said.

IRAS                         Am I not an inch of fortune better than she?

- CHARMIAN                    Well, if you were but an inch of fortune better than  
I, where would you choose it?
- IRAS                            Not in my husband's nose.
- CHARMIAN                    Our worser thoughts heavens mend! Alexas,--come,  
his fortune, his fortune! O, let him marry a woman  
that cannot go, sweet Isis, I beseech thee! and let  
her die too, and give him a worse! and let worst  
follow worse, till the worst of all follow him  
laughing to his grave, fifty-fold a cuckold! Good  
Isis, hear me this prayer, though thou deny me a  
matter of more weight; good Isis, I beseech thee!
- IRAS                            Amen. Dear goddess, hear that prayer of the people!  
for, as it is a heartbreaking to see a handsome man  
loose-wived, so it is a deadly sorrow to behold a  
foul knave uncuckolded: therefore, dear Isis, keep  
decorum, and fortune him accordingly!
- CHARMIAN                    Amen.
- ALEXAS                        Lo, now, if it lay in their hands to make me a  
cuckold, they would make themselves whores, but  
they'd do't!
- IRAS                            Hush! here comes Antony.
- ALEXAS                        Not he; the queen.