

ACT I --A State Room in the Palace.

Scene 1

Enter SABINUS and SILIUS, followed by LATIARIS.

Sab. Hail, Caius Silius!

Sil. Titius Sabinus, hail!
You're rarely met in court.

Sab. Therefore, well met.

Sil.'Tis true: indeed, this place is not our sphere.

Sab.
No, Silius, we are no good courtiers
We lack eager and serviceable mouths,
To make us graced, or favour'd of the times:
We have no shift of faces to smile or frown
As great ones smile or frown. We've no cleft tongues,
Nor soft and sticky bodies that can climb
Snail-like up palace walls, trailing filth
Guiltily behind, as they, who ascend
By falling, rise by creeping, and grovel to gain
High place. Nor burn we with dark secrets, making
Us dear to their pale authors.

[Enter SATRIUS and NATTA, at a distance.]

Sil.
But yonder lean
A pair that do.

Sab. [salutes Latiaris.] Good cousin Latiaris.—

Sil.
Satrius Secundus, and Pinnarius Natta,
The great Sejanus' clients: these be two
Whose charnel breath tells just what reeking secrets

They've buried in their breasts. Rip them open
And there's not a sin you wouldn't find
Fest'ring in their guts. They can lie,
Flatter, and swear, forswear, deprave, inform,
Smile, and betray; make guilty men; then beg
The forfeit lives, to get their estates; cut
Men's throats with whisperings; sell to hungry climbers
The empty smoke, that flies about the palace;
Laugh when their patron laughs; sweat when he sweats;
Look well or ill with him: ready to praise
His lordship, if he spit, or but piss well,
Has a voluminous dump, or farts proudly;
Nothing can 'scape their narrow sight.

Sab.

Alas! such base flatt'ries among the low
Are hardly news at all, compared with the vile
And abject prostrations of our leading citizens:
I mean our consuls, and no little part
Of our quaking praetors, yea, most of
Our senators, who otherwise won't pipe up,
For any worthwhile cause, unless it be
To strive who first may sell the public good
To private gain; or who may boast himself
Readiest to trample the last vestige of our
Ancient liberty, and with lowest bow
And wettest lips to kiss great Caesar's ring.
So debased these Senators have proved,
Tiberius hath oft been moved to curse
"O vile beggars, clamoring for servitude!"

Sil.

Well, we cowards deserve it all, and worse,
Who with our riots, pride, and civil hate,
Have so provok'd the justice of the gods:
We, that, within these fourscore years, were born
Free, equal lords of the triumphed world,
And knew no masters, but our passions;
To which betraying first our liberties,
We since became the slaves to one man's lusts;

And now to many: every minist'ring spy
That will accuse and swear, is lord of you,
Of me, of all our fortunes and our lives.
Our looks are call'd to question, and our words,
How so innocent they be, are made crimes;
We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreams,
Or think, but 'twill be treason.

Sab.

Tyrants' arts
Are to give flatterers grace; accusers, power;
That those may seem to kill whom they devour.

[Enter CORDUS and ARRUNTIUS].

Now, good Cremutius Cordus

Cor. [salutes Sabinus] Hail to your lordship!

Nat. [whispers to Latiaris.] Who's that salutes your cousin?

Lat.

'Tis one Cordus,
A gentleman of Rome: one that has writ
Annals of late, they say, and very well.

Nat. Annals! of what times?

Lat.

I think of Pompey's,
And Caius Caesar's; and so down to these.

Nat.

How stands he affected to the present state!
Is he or Drusian, or Germanican,
Or ours, or neutral?

Lat.

I know him not so far.

Nat.

Those times are somewhat queasy to be touch'd.
Have you but seen, or heard part of his work?

Lat. Not I; 'tis said they shall be public shortly.

Nat. So: Cordus do you call him?

Lat. Ay. [Exeunt Natta and Satrius]

Sab.

But these our times
Are not the same, Arruntius.

Arr.

Times? the men,
The men are not the same: 'tis we are base,
Poor, and degenerate from the exalted strain
Of our great fathers. Where is now the soul
Of god-like Cato? he, that dared be good,
When Caesar dared do evil; and had power,
As not to live his slave, to die his master?
Or where's the constant Brutus, who did strike
So brave a blow into the monster's heart
That sought unkindly to captive his country?
O, they are fled the light! Those mighty spirits
Lie raked up with their ashes in their urns,
And not a spark of their eternal fire
Glow in our sickly marrow. All's but blaze,
Flashes and smoke, empty posturing,
There's nothing Roman in us; nothing good,
Gallant, or great: 'tis true that Cordus says,
"Brave Cassius was the last of all that race."

[Drusus passes over the stage, attended by the Lictor]

Sab. Stand by! Lord Drusus!

Lic. The emperor's son! Give place!

Sil. I like the prince well.

Arr.

A riotous youth;
There's little hope of him.

Sab.

That fault his age
Will, as it grows, correct. Methinks he bears
Himself each day more nobly than other;
And wins him men's affections just as fast
As doth his father lose them. Believe me,
I love him; and chiefly for opposing to Sejanus.

Sil.

And I, for gracing his young kinsmen so,
The sons of prince Germanicus: it shows
A gallant clearness in him, a straight mind,
That envies not, in them, their father's name.

Arr.

Noble Germanicus! O, that man!
If there were seeds of the old virtue left,
They lived in him.

Sil.

He had the fruits, Arruntius,
More than the seeds: Sabinus, and myself
Had means to know him closely; and can report him.
He called us friends, and, what his funerals lack'd
In images and pomp, they had supplied
With honourable sorrow, soldiers' sadness,
A kind of silent mourning, such, as men,
Who know no tears, but from their captives, use
To show in such great losses.

Arr.

I am sure
He was too great for us, and that they knew
Who did remove him hence.

Sab.

When men grow fast
Honour'd and loved. there is a trick in state,
Which jealous princes never fail to use,
How to trim that growth, with fair pretext,
And honourable features of employment,
Either by embassy, the war, or such,
To shift them from the very heart of empire,
Where they may soon come to grief; so he was:
And had dubious nobles, sent by Tiberius,
And his thug Sejanus, to discontent him;
To breed and cherish mutinies; detract
His greatest actions; give audacious check
To his commands; and prick him on towards
An open act of treason. All which snares
When his wise cares prevented, a fine poison
Was thought on, to mature their practices.

Scene 2

[Enter SEJANUS talking to TERENCE, COTTA
followed by SATRIUS, NATTA, etc.]

Cor. Here comes Sejanus.

Sil.

Now observe the bows,
The scrapings, and the hails.

Arr. Most creeping base!

Sej. [to Natta.] I note them well: no more. Say you?

Sat.

My lord,
There is a gentleman of Rome would buy-

Sej. How call you him you talk'd with?

Sat.

My lord general,
It is Eudemus, the physician
To Livia, Drusus' wife.

Sej. On with your suit. Would buy, you said-

Sat. A tribune's place, my lord.

Sej. What will he give?

Sat. Fifty gold pieces.

Sej. Livia's physician, say you, is that fellow?

Sat. It is, my lord: Your lordship's answer.

Sej.

To what?

Sat.

The place, my lord. 'Tis for a gentleman
Your lordship will like most well, when you see him;
And one whom you may hire as you see fit.

Sej.

Well, let him bring his money, and his name.

Sat.

'Thank your lordship. He shall, my lord.

Sej.

Come hither.

Know you this same Eudemus? is he learn'd?

Sat.

Reputed so, my lord, and of deep practice.

Sej.

Bring him in, to me, in the gallery;
And take you cause to leave us there together:
I would confer with him, about a grief——

On. [Exeunt Sejanus, Satrius, Terentius, etc.]

Arr.

O foul and desp'rate state of grovelling honour
That for the warming ray of power's smile
Upon their upturned faces, men will betray
Their very reason for living. Methinks that day
Should lose his light, when men so lose their shames.

Sil.

But should Sejanus smile, who needs the sun?
He is now the court god, and receives
Sacrifice of bent knees, and cringing looks.
'Tis he alone makes us our day or night.
His smile is more than than e'er yet poets feign'd
Of earthly bliss or joy.

Arr.

A serving boy!

I knew Sejanus when at Caesar's table
He'd sell his body to the highest bidder,
When his fame was scrawled on bathhouse walls,
Telling how he'd let that monstrous glutton
Fat Apicius, bend him over and stuff
His bruised and willing hole full of gold.

Sab.

And, now, the second face of the whole world!
The partner of the empire, hath his image
Rear'd equal with Tiberius, born in purple;
Commands, disposes every dignity,
Centurions, tribunes, heads of provinces,
Praetors and consuls; all that heretofore
Rome's people gave, is now his sale.

Sil.

He has of late
Compounded his strength, namely, by drawing
All the praetorian bands into one camp,
Which he alone commands.

Sab.

And feasts the chiefest men of action
Lavishly putting forth an open hand
Careless how great a fortune he lets fall
To win them to his party and to bind them
To his ambition.

Arr.

Yet, has he ambition?
Is there that step in state can make him higher,
Or more, or anything he is, but less?

Sil. Nothing but emperor.

Arr.

The name Tiberius,
I hope, will keep, howe'er he has foregone
The dignity and power.

Sil.

Sure, while he lives.

Arr.

And dead, it comes to Drusus.
Should *he* fail, To the brave issue of Germanicus;
And they are three: too many--ha? for him
To have a plot upon!

Sab.

I do not know
The heart of his designs; but, sure, their face
Looks frowning to the future.

Arr.

By the gods,
If I could guess he had that very thought,
My sword should cleave him down from head to heart,
And from his broken skull I'd scoop his still
Pulsing brains, and dash them to the ground
Grind them with my heel till there was nothing

Of them left but atoms, not a piece
Of flesh so big that it could think another
Thought so monstrous.

Sab. You are observ'd, Arruntius.

Arr. [turns to Natta, Cotta, etc.]

Death! I dare tell him so; and all his spies:
You, sir, I would, do you look? and you.

Sab. Forbear. [they retire]

SCENE 3

A Gallery discovered opening into the state Room.
Enter SATRIUS with EUDEMUS.

Sat.

Your fortune's made unto you now, Eudemus,
If you can but lay hold upon the means;

Enter SEJANUS.

Here comes his lordship.

Sej. Now, good Satrius.

Sat. This is the gentleman, my lord.

Sej.

Is this?

Give me your hand—we must be more acquainted.
Report, sir, hath spoke of your art and learning:
And I am glad I have so needful cause
To make me known to so great virtue.—Look,
Who is that, Satrius? [Exit Sat.]

I have a grief, sir,
That will desire your help. Your name's Eudemus?

Eud. Yes.

Sej. Sir?

Eud. It is, my lord.

Sej.
I hear you are
Physician to Livia, the princess.

Eud. I minister unto her, my good lord.

Sej.
I know she's quick and quaintly spirited,
And will have strange thoughts, when she is at leisure:
She tells them all to you?

Eud.
My noblest lord,
He breathes not in the empire, or on earth.
Whom I would be ambitious to serve
(In any act, that may preserve mine honor),
Before your lordship.

Sej.
Sir, you can lose no honour,
By trusting all to me. The coarsest act
Done to my service, I can so requite,
As all the world shall style it honourable.

Eud.
But, good my lord, if I should thus betray
The counsels of my patient, and a lady's
Of her high place and worth; what might your lordship,
(Who presently are to trust me with your own),
Judge of my faith?

Sej.
Only the best, I swear.
Say now that I should utter you my grief,
And with it the true cause; that it were love,
And love for Livia; and you should tell her this:

In turn I would that you could tell as much
From her to me.

Eud.

Happily, my lord,
I could in time tell you as much and more;
So I might safely promise but the first
To her from you.

Sej.

As safely, my Eudemus,
I now dare call thee so, as I have put
The secret into thee.

Eud.

My lord——

Sej.

Protest not,
Thy looks are vows to me; use only speed,
And but acquaint her with Sejanus' love,
Thou art a man made for consul. Go.

Eud.

My lord, I'll promise you a private meeting
This day together.

Sej.

Canst thou?

Eud.

Yes.

Sej.

The place?

Eud.

My gardens, whither I shall fetch your lordship

Sej;

I shall count the hours. Be gone, my friend,
Not merely styled, but created so;
Expect things greater than thy largest hopes,
To overtake thee: Fortune shall be taught

Chief partner of our labours. No man here
Receive our speeches as hyperboles:
For we're as far from flattering our friend,
Let envy know, as from the need to flatter.
Lead, away: Our loves unto the senate.
[Exeunt Tib., Sejan., Natta, Ter, Lat., Lictors, etc.]

Arr. Caesar!

Sil. Check your passion;
Lord Drusus carries.

Dru.
Is my father run mad,
Weary of life, and rule, lords? thus to heave
An idol up with praise! make him his mate,
His rival in the empire!

Cor. O, good prince.

Dru.
Allow him statues, titles, honours, such
As he himself refuses!

Arr. Noble Drusus!

Dru.
The first ascents to sovereignty are hard;
But, once begun, there never lacks the means,
Or ministers, to help the aspirer on.

Arr. True, gallant Drusus.

Dru.
We must shortly pray
To Modesty, that he will rest contented——

Arr.
Ay, where he is, and not think emperor.

[Re-enter SEJANUS, SATRIUS, LATIARIS, COTTA, etc.]

Sej.

There is your bill, and yours; bring you your man.

[To Satrius.]

I have moved for you, too, Latiaris.

Dru.

What!

Is your vast greatness grown so blindly bold,
That you run over us?

Sej.

Why then give way.

Dru.

Give way, Colossus! will you fight? will you charge?

Take that! [Strikes him.]

Arr. Good! brave! excellent, brave prince!

Dru.

Nay, come, approach.

[Draws his sword.]

What, stand you off? Lost your faint nerve?

Avoid mine eye, dull camel, or my sword

Shall make thy bravery fitter for a grave,

Than for a triumph. I'll raise you a statue

And it will be life size; but on the cross;

Where I will nail your pride at breadth and length,

And crack those sinews, which are yet but stretch'd

With your swol'n fortune's rage.

Arr.

A noble prince!

Variously: Drusus! Drusus! For shame! An outrage! Etc.

[Exeunt all but Sejanus.]

Sej.

He that, with such wrong moved, can bear it through

With patience, and an even mind, knows how

To turn it back. Wrath cover'd carries fate:

Revenge is lost, if I profess my hate.

What was my practice late, I'll now pursue,

As my fell justice: this hath styled it new. [Exit.]