

Act 1.2

Temple of Isis, goddess of fertility

*Enter CALPURNIA & PORTIA (with her sleeping 2 month old baby) to make an offering.*

**CALPURNIA**

The goddess Isis would not deem deprive  
A fertile woman of her given right,  
In solidarity with certain guests  
Who pester us in Rome?

**PORTIA**

Not all Egyptians  
Desire to torment thee.

**CALPURNIA**

Can you be sure?  
Perhaps I should have doubl'd sacrifice,  
For I am Caesar's wife; expectancy  
Around my offerings, may far exceed  
The paltry shows I bring.

**PORTIA**

Thy monthly gifts  
Have grown in cost and size. The Nile o'erflows  
But once a year, her generosity  
Enough to fill our Roman hoard of grain  
'til spring comes round again. I often fear,  
If thou conceiv'd the child that thou desire'st,  
This temple would collapse.

**CALPURNIA**

Now Portia hush,  
Thy skepticism may unfairly skew  
The gift the Goddess of Fertility  
Can manifest for one's fidelity.

**Disparage not the faith thou dost not know. (A Midsummer Night's Dream, 3.2 Demetrius)**

**PORTIA**

I simply seek to spare thee of more grief.

**CALPURNIA**

**When forty winters shall beseege my brow,  
And dig deep trenches in my beauty's field,  
My youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,  
Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held:  
Then being ask'd where all my beauty lies,  
Where all the treasure of my youthful days,  
To say, within mine own deep-sunken eyes,  
Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.**

**How much more praise deserves my beauty's use,  
If I could answer 'This fair child of mine  
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'  
Proving his beauty by succession mine! (Sonnet 2)**

Perhaps next month I'll come here joyfully,  
'til then I worship Isis loyally.

**PORTIA**

Another Moon has pass'd her sentence down  
Upon thy budding womb's great enterprise?

**CALPURNIA**

The tide is high and it is red, again.

**PORTIA**

Calpurnia do not let despairing doubts  
Seep in too deep. These words to thee belong:  
My comfort when I thought myself too weak  
To bear the loss of Brother, Husband, Father.  
Thou promis'd me that brighter days stood near,  
That life intended me for greater use  
Than watering thy robes with salty rains.  
Thy prophecy prov'd true and so will mine:  
Thy time will come, a Mother thou wilt be.  
I have no Temple, no one worships me,  
But thou deserv'st all this, I know that true.  
And'pon th'arrival of thy healthy child  
We'll laugh and scoff at thy unfounded doubts  
Which caus'd suspicion to mistrust the fates,  
Which hitherto have serv'd us faithfully:  
For friendship such as ours is as reward  
For heroism in another life —  
When we, Centurions, defended Rome  
Against barbarians and bloody foes.

**CALPURNIA**

I'd make a terrible Centurion.

**PORTIA**

What's more, our matches prove this point forsooth:  
Our husbands, most alike in prominence —

**CALPURNIA**

Thy husband's absolute devotedness  
To thy exclusive marriage bed's unmatched  
By anyone. Thy Brutus is a flower  
Who blooms for thee alone, I cannot claim  
Such solitary rights of Caesar's heart.

**PORTIA**

Ten turbulent and brutal years of war  
Have jarr'd the harmony of marriage rights  
And many Roman homes are still unchilded.

**CALPURINA**

But only mine can claim great Caesar's bed;  
A King must have an heir and my soul rot  
In Tartarus if that Egyptian girl  
E'en tries to claim her son, unlawful brat,  
As heir to all that Caesar does achieve.

**PORTIA**

A King thou sayst?

**CALPURINA**

A King, a Senator,  
A Merchant e'en; a man demands a son.

**PORTIA**

Yet we must not obscure with Monarchy  
Our clear ey'd peace. What good are sons if bred  
To fall in War? I cannot lose one more  
Relation to ambition's deadly reach,  
Thou must not speak of Kings.

**CALPURNIA**

Th'Egyptian Queen  
Doth sow these rotten seeds into our lives.

**PORTIA**

But Cleopatra is not Caesar's wife.  
Her claim's as fleeting as the lines of kohl  
She paints around her eyes. Thy sway is strong:  
A marriage of longevity, as thine,  
Uplifts a wife to stand on highest plain.  
Then for the sake of children soon to come,  
All talk herein of Monarchies exil'd  
For with it comes the surety of War.  
I dream our children shall inherit peace,  
Their lives devoid of foreign battlefields.

**CALPURNIA**

They shall! For how could such a smile as his,  
Bring naught but joy to all who look upon't?

**PORTIA**

My future's hope does rest in his sweet face,  
Soon shar'd in equal parts with thine own child's.  
Together they will gladiators play,  
Or if thou hast a girl, they could be wed!

**CALPURNIA**

A marriage plann'd before she's e'en conceiv'd?

**PORTIA**

The eldest daughter of Calpurnia  
Will be pursu'd by th'noblest of Rome.

**CALPURNIA**

By ancient men who seek a nubile bride.

**PORTIA**

Hands full of coins and ears chock full of hairs.

**CALPURNIA**

No! Never would I make my daughter wed  
A man decrepit and four times her age,  
Despite his wealth.

**PORTIA**

Then our proposal stands?

**CALPURNIA**

Tis in consideration, for this time.

**PORTIA**

I'll tell him when he wakes.

**CALPURNIA**

Sweetest Portia,

Without thy steady temperament to guide  
My bitter thoughts away from hopelessness,  
I'd likely spit upon expectant girls  
Who pass'd me by, their rosy cheeks a-glow.

**PORTIA**

The Feast of th'Lupercal approaches nigh  
When all of Rome exalts Fertility:  
This month may yet bear fruit, for spring I hear  
Approaches quickly if thou welcom'st it.

**Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair**

**To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir. (Sonnet 6)**

*Exeunt*