

Antony and Cleopatra

by William Shakespeare

Act II, sc. 2 (line 223)

Domitius Enobarbus

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion--cloth-of-gold of tissue--
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

AGRIPPA

O, rare for Antony!

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adornings: at the helm
A seeming mermaid steers: the silken tackle

Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
That yarely frame the office. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in nature.

AGRIPPA

Rare Egyptian!

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

Upon her landing, Antony sent to her,
Invited her to supper: she replied,
It should be better he became her guest;
Which she entreated: our courteous Antony,
Whom ne'er the word of 'No' woman heard speak,
Being barber'd ten times o'er, goes to the feast,
And for his ordinary pays his heart
For what his eyes eat only.

AGRIPPA

Royal wench!

She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed:

He plough'd her, and she cropp'd.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

I saw her once

Hop forty paces through the public street;

And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
That she did make defect perfection,
And, breathless, power breathe forth.

MECAENAS

Now Antony must leave her utterly.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS

Never; he will not:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale

Her infinite variety: other women cloy

The appetites they feed: but she makes hungry

Where most she satisfies; for vilest things

Become themselves in her: that the holy priests

Bless her when she is riggish.