



Timon of Athens

Timon is a kind and generous aristocrat in Athens with one major fault—he is a spendthrift. Everyone loves him because of his generosity as a host. When Timon finds himself confronted with creditors, however, his steward, Flavius, can do little more than tell him that he is bankrupt. Timon then sends his servants to his “friends,” only to receive excuses in return; no one will lend him money to repay his debts. Angered by this, Timon invites them all to one last feast. The only dish, to everyone’s surprise, is warm water. Timon then denounces not only his former comrades but mankind as a whole.

In the meantime, Alcibiades, a captain of Athens, has been pleading against a death sentence given to one of his men by the Senate. For his persistence, Alcibiades is banished; Alcibiades, on the other hand, despises the Senate and decides to turn his army against Athens in revenge. He hears about Timon, who has fled Athens to live a hermit’s life. Timon, it seems, was digging for roots to eat and stumbled upon a buried trove of gold. Alcibiades tries to befriend Timon, even offering him money. Timon, however, counters with offers of gold to Alcibiades if he will sack Athens. Alcibiades accepts a portion of the treasure to pay his men, then marches on Athens. More visitors, these in the form of bandits, pay a visit. Timon pays them gold on the condition that they too wreak lawless havoc on Athens. The bandits accept the gold, but Timon’s rant stirs them instead, ironically, to give up thieving. Timon even sends away his former steward, Flavius, although with gold in his pockets and more kindness than he has shown to anyone else.

Alcibiades enters Athens with little resistance; the Athenians beg Timon for help, but the only help Timon offers is a tree outside his cave—upon which he says they can hang themselves, each according to his or her will. The senators ingratiate themselves with Alcibiades by giving up his enemies and those that refused to help Timon when he was in debt. Alcibiades agrees, vowing peace in Athens. However, a soldier enters with the sad news that Timon has died in his cave, alone at the end.

Dramatis Personae

Timon, a noble Athenian
Lucius, a flattering lord
Lucullus, a flattering lord
Sempronius, a flattering lord
Ventidius, a false friend of Timon
Alcibiades, an Athenian captain
Apemantus, a churlish philosopher
Flavius, steward to Timon
Flaminius, Timon’s servant
Lucilius, Timon’s servant
Servilius, Timon’s servant
Caphis, Philotus, Titus, Lucius, and Hortensius, servants of Timon’s creditors
Poet, Painter, Jeweler, Merchant
An Old Athenian
Servants to Varro and Isidore
Three Strangers
A Page
A Fool
Phrynia, mistress of Alcibiades
Timandra, mistress of Alcibiades
Lords, Senators, Officers, Soldiers, Thieves, and Attendants
Cupid and Masque Amazons