

Apollonia of Ephesus

A one act play

By

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Dramatis Personae

Apollonia

Queen of Ephesus. In her late thirties to early forties, she is the product of a privileged upbringing and unsure of her own abilities.

Sebastiano

Brother to the slain king Erychtheus, Sebastiano is a cunning, cruel and self-centred man. In his late forties to early fifties.

Aveena

Sebastiano's daughter. In her early twenties, she is as cruel as her father but lacking his self-control.

Themeus

Faithful servant to Erychtheus, and now to Apollonia, he could be any age.

A messenger (can also be a part of the chorus)

The chorus

Three servants in the palace.

Staging

A simple black backdrop with a couple key pieces of furniture in each scene.

Scene I: A pedestal with a bust on it, and a throne.

Scenes II and IV: Aveena's quarters. A sleeping couch

Scene III: Apollonia's quarters. A sleeping couch draped with rich fabric, and a small chest containing goblets, gloves, and a tapestry.

Scene V: A rough wooden wall, with some riding paraphernalia hanging on it.

Scene VI: A cabinet, with one side a dark screen, facing the audience. A large chest, beside it a discarded suit of Greek armour. A small table holding various daggers.

The chorus serves to provide some background information as well as to change the scene. As they speak, they can move the necessary furniture in and out.

Act I
Scene 1

Main hall of the Palace

Messenger O my Queen!
O Apollonia, fairest of all women the length
And breadth of this noble land.
What spiteful Fate has pick'd my lot
To blemish your ivory brow with woe?
Sooner would I tear out mine own tongue than
Bear to you such foul words as these,
And yet the truth must out and so- but I weep to say
it.

Apollonia Pray calm yourself, boy!
What ill news has you in such a turmoil?

Messenger Not a full fortnight ago, when still the moon
Was in its wane, your husband, our king
The good Erychtheus, son of Marius, known and
Well loved for his deeds and valour
As is, or was, his son.

Apollonia Was! Though you couch your words in silk
Still I feel the barbs.
Continue boy, though I fear I know now your purpose.

Messenger No sorrow can be hidden upon this transparent visage.
My purpose is clear. I bring to you
No glad tidings, but only funereal note.
Your good king Erychtheus, gone on missions diplomatic,
Has met his end at the point of an assassin's dagger.

Apollonia O woe betideth me and mine!
Though he hath fought bravely for his country
Eight and thirty years gone,
'Twas no soldier's arrow pierced his breast
Nor battle heated sword rent him in two
Nor unseen enemy in patriotic battle who's drained his
blood.
But in time of peace, when vigilance doth rest
That evil, in the form of man
Rears it's leering face and pinions my love
With icy heart. And he unarmed. What cowardice!

Messenger Not cowardice my queen, but cunning
For though personally unarmed his cavalcade
Of personnel surrounded him.
Yet in the guise of an unfortunate
A slovenly, hard-treated, starved degenerate,

One of the profanum vulgis, the assassin preyed upon our king.

Knowing that his altruism was his fault
This venal fiend approached on bended knee
And begged alms.
Upon receipt of which he shed a duplicitous tear and
Fell upon our king as if in glad embrace
Whilst sliding his dagger home to pierce
Erychtheus' noble heart. And as our king fell dying
This worker of iniquity slipped soundlessly from sight
Bearing the alms, a fraudulent payment for his
Atrocious deed.

Apollonia O my king! My love, my husband!
Three and twenty years I waited for the aftermath
Of wars to carry home the body of my beloved,
A man I knew more in deed than in body.
But every war left him unscathed,
Each time he returned to me until, not two years past
He sallied home bearing with him parchments of peace
And vowed that my mind should be from then at rest
No war, no strife to separate us again.
And now the husband whom I'd just begun to know
Is gone from me again.
But who hath perpetrated this foul deed?
No enemies had he, nor scheming detractors,
No devilish subcommittees of usurpers walked these Senate
halls.
What baseless recidivist could conceive of such depravity?

Messenger My queen, your sorrows are your people's.
Excuse me, but I must away. (*Exits*)

Sebastiano enters.

Sebastiano My dear Apollonia, what terrible news does fall
Upon mine ear. My brother, dead?
How so, and why? A more beloved man there never was.
On such a day as this surely great Ephesus must come to
ruin.

Apollonia Ruin, no. My husband would not have it so.
He did not give his life to kill his work.

Sebastiano You misinterpret me, my queen. I meant only
That the grief of Ephesus will surely be
A crippling one. The misanthrope who orchestrated this
Surely had anarchy on his mind.

Apollonia Then we will foil him, and rule as Erychtheus would
wish.

Sebastiano I would deem it an honour to his name to rule
As he would have, to stand in his stead and
Give life to his unborn plans. I would not let his death
be in vain,
But turn it to his eternal advantage.

Apollonia I applaud your dedication, but 'tis too soon
For such discussions. Pray excuse me.
I would be alone in my grief. (*Exits*)

Sebastiano My brother dead, an unknown assassin at large.
O, what vile machinations have reduced
Our kingdom thus? (smiles)
A plan so brilliant, without motive, means or suspect
Conceived and wrought by some catastrophic genius.
I hesitate to name myself,
I would be humbler else, but 'tis too great a scheme
To remain anonymous.
Yet, I must keep tight counsel lest
Boastful lips prevent well-knit plans
From coming to fruition. (*Exits*)

Chorus enters. As they change the scene, The three palace servants talk.

Servant 1 What strange news this is.
The king assassinated? For what purpose?

Servant 2 For what purpose? Does a madman now need reason?
His death serves some man's happiness.
His queen will surely crumble 'neath the strain.

Servant 3 His queen did not need so strong a blow to crumble.
But I do not think a madman did this.

Servant 1 Madman or no, the city will not survive it.
The queen has not the strength to rule us.
She looks well, but sees herself only
As an ornament to her king.