

Pericles abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 4

Discouraged

Situation: Cleon, the governor of Tarsus, and his wife are discussing the terrible toll the famine has brought to the city and their people. He notes that the famine is particularly difficult for the people since “Plenty held full hand” until recently.

CLEON: This Tarsus, o’er which I have the government, a city on whom Plenty held full hand, for Riches strewed herself even in her streets. The tables of men and women were stored full so glad the sight, and not so much to feed on as delight; all poverty was scorned, and pride so great, the name of help grew odious to repeat.

DIONYZA: O, ‘tis too true.

Cleon to Dionyza

These mouths showed but little contentment and
Joy with what the earth, sea and air did hand
Them, these creatures being then so unwise.
As houses are defiled by lack of use,
These mouths are starved for lack of exercise.
These mouths who did two summers past abuse
Their palates by demanding creative
Dishes would now beg for bread just to live.
Hunger’s teeth are so sharp that couples draw
Lots to determine who shall be first to
Die and who will lengthen life. I here saw
A lord and lady weeping, as did you!
Those that see them fall scarcely have strength to
Give them a burial. Is not this true?

DIONYZA: Our cheeks and hollow eyes do witness it.

CLEON: O, let those cities that have Plenty’s cup hear these tears. The misery of Tarsus may be theirs.