

FAVOURITE SHAKESPEARE MONOLOGUES AND DUOLOGUES OF PROFESSIONAL ACTORS

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Emmeline Prior

I love this speech from the final act of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It comes after a very dramatic moment when Caesar's soldier, Proculeius, has just snatched away a dagger from the captured Queen of Egypt, thereby preventing her from killing herself. Cleopatra is determined that she will die by her own contrivance rather than submit to the will of Caesar.

Even though this is one of Cleopatra's shorter monologues, to me it encapsulates so many aspects of her character: pride, bravery, impetuousness, and her unwillingness to bow to the power of Rome. It also emphasizes her regal nature; her love of Egypt; and her jealous derision towards Antony's legal wife, Octavia.

Sir, I will eat no meat, I'll not drink, sir. If idle talk will once be necessary, I'll not sleep neither. This mortal house I'll ruin, Do Caesar what he can. Know, sir, that I Will not wait pinioned at your master's court, Nor once be chastised with the sober eye Of dull Octavia. Shall they hoist me up And show me to the shouting varletry Of censuring Rome? Rather a ditch in Egypt Be gentle grave unto me. Rather on Nilus' mud Lay me stark naked and let the waterflies Blow me into abhorring. Rather make My country's high pyramides my gibbet And hang me up in chains!



Antony and Cleopatra Act 5, Scene 2.

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