

Rice Cale Young

Charles Di Tocca: A Tragedy



Cale Rice

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Cale Young Rice
Charles Di Tocca: A Tragedy
To My Wife

CHARLES DI TOCCA

A Tragedy

CHARLES DI TOCCA	<i>Duke of Leucadia, Tyrant of Arta, etc.</i>
ANTONIO DI TOCCA	<i>His son.</i>
HÆMON	<i>A Greek noble.</i>
BARDAS	<i>His friend.</i>
CARDINAL JULIAN	<i>The Pope's Legate.</i>
AGABUS	<i>A mad monk.</i>
CECCO	<i>Seneschal of the Castle.</i>
FULVIA COLONNA	<i>Under the duke's protection.</i>
HELENA	<i>Sister to Hæmon.</i>
GIULIA	<i>Serving Fulvia.</i>
PAULA	<i>Serving Helena.</i>
LYGIA PHAON ZOE BASIL	<i>Revellers.</i>

Nardo, a boy, and Diogenes, a philosopher

A Captain of the Guard. Soldiers, Guests,

Attendants, etc

Time: Fifteenth Century

ACT ONE

Scene. —The Island Leucadia. A ruined temple of Apollo near the town of Pharo. Broken columns and stones are strewn, or stand desolately about. It is night – the moon rising. Antonio, who has been waiting impatiently, seats himself on a stone. By a road near the ruins Fulvia enters, cloaked.

Antonio (*turning*): Helen – !

Fulvia: A comely name, my lord.

Antonio: Ah, you?
My father's unforgetting Fulvia?

Fulvia: At least not Helena, whoe'er she be.

Antonio: And did I call you so?

Fulvia: Unless it is
These stones have tongue and passion.

Antonio: Then the night
Recalling dreams of dim antiquity's
Heroic bloom worked on me. – But whence are
Your steps, so late, alone?

Fulvia: From the Cardinal,
Who has but come.

Antonio: What comfort there?

Fulvia: With doom
The moody bolt of Rome broods over us.

Antonio: My father will not bind his heresy?

Fulvia: You with him walked to-day. What said he?

Antonio: I?
With him to-day? Ah, true. What may be done?

Fulvia: He has been strange of late and silent, laughs,
Seeing the Cross, but softly and almost
As it were some sweet thing he loved.

Antonio (*absently*): As if
'Twere some sweet thing – he laughs – is strange – you say?

Fulvia: Stranger than is Antonio his son,
Who but for some expectancy is vacant.

(She makes to go.)

Antonio: Stay, Fulvia, though I am not in poise.
Last night I dreamed of you: in vain you hovered
To reach me from the coil of swift Charybdis.

(A low cry, Antonio starts.)

Fulvia: A woman's voice!
(*Looking down the road.*)
And hasting here!

Antonio: Alone?

Fulvia: No, with another!

Antonio: Go, then, Fulvia.
'Tis one would speak with me.

Fulvia: Ah? (*She goes.*)

Enter Helena frightenedly with Paula

Helena: Antonio!

Antonio: My Helena, what is it? You are wan
And tremble as a blossom quick with fear
Of shattering. What is it? Speak.

Helena: Not true!
O, 'tis not true!

Antonio: What have you chanced upon?

Helena: Say no to me, say no, and no again!

Antonio: Say no, and no?

Helena: Yes; I am reeling, wrung,
With one glance o'er the precipice of ill!
Say his incanted prophecies spring from

No power that's more than frenzied fantasy!

Antonio: Who prophesies? Who now upon this isle
More than visible and present day
Can gather to his eye? Tell me.

Helena: The monk —
Ah, chide me not! – mad Agabus, who can
Unsphere dark spirits from their evil airs
And show all things of love or death, seized me
As hither I stole to thee. With wild looks
And wilder lips he vented on my ear
Boding more wild than both. "Sappho!" he cried,
"Sappho! Sappho!" and probed my eyes as if
Destiny moved dark-visaged in their deeps.
Then tore his rags and moaned, "So young, to cease!"
Gazed then out into awful vacancy;
And whispered hotly, following his gaze,
"The Shadow! Shadow!"

Antonio: This is but a whim,
A sudden gloomy surge of superstition.
Put it from you, my Helena.

Helena: But he
Has often cleft the future with his ken,
Seen through it to some lurking misery
And mar of love: or the dim knell of death
Heard and revealed.

Antonio: A witless monk who thinks
God lives but to fulfil his prophecies!

Helena: You know him not. 'Tis told in youth he loved
One treacherous, and in avenge made fierce
Treaty with Hell that lends him sight of all
Ills that arise from it to mated hearts!
Yet look not so, my lord! I'll trust thine eyes
That tell me love is master of all times,
And thou of all love master!

Antonio: And of thee?
Then will the winds return unto the night
And flute us lover songs of happiness!

Helena: Nor dare upon a duller note while here
We tryst beneath the moon?

Antonio: My perfect Greek!

Athene looks again out of thy lids,
And Venus trembles in thy every limb!

Helena: Not Venus, ah, not Venus!

Antonio: Now; again?

Helena: 'Twas on this temple's ancient gate she found
Wounded Adonis dead, and to forget,
Like Sappho leaped, 'tis said, from yonder cliff
Down to the waves' oblivion below.

Antonio: And will you read such terror in a tale?

Helena: Forgive me, then.

Antonio: Surely you are unstrung,
And yet there is — (*Turns away from her.*)

Helena: Is what? Antonio?

Antonio: Nothing: I who must ebb with you and flow
A little was moved.

Helena: Not you, not you! I'll change
My tears to laughter, if but fantasy
May so unmettle you! Not moved, indeed!
Not moved, Antonio?

Antonio: Well, let us off,
My Helena, with these numb awes that wind
About our joy.

Helena: Thy kiss then, for it can
Drive all gloom out of the world!

Antonio: And thine, my own,
On Fate's hard brow would shame it of all frown!

Helena: Yet is thine mightier, for no frown can be
When no more gloom's in the world!

Antonio: But 'tis thy lips
That lend it might. If I pressed other —

Helena: Other!
You should not know that any other lips
Could e'er be pressed; I'll have no kiss but his
Who is all blind to every mouth but mine!

(Breaks from him.)

Antonio: Oh? – Well.

Helena: "Oh – well?" – Then it is well I go!

Antonio: Perhaps.

Helena: "Perhaps!" (*Makes to go.*)

Antonio: Good-night.

Helena (*returning*): Antonio – ?

Antonio: Ah! still – ?

Helena: There's gloom in the world again.

Antonio (*kissing her*): 'Tis gone?

Helena: Not all, I think.

Antonio: Two for so small a gloom?

(Kisses her again.)

Helena: So small!

Antonio: And still you sigh?

Helena: The vainest glooms
To-night seem ominous – as cloud-flakes flung
Upward before the heaving of the west.
(*In fright*) Oh!

Antonio: Helena!

Helena: See, see! 'tis Agabus!

Enter Agabus unkempt and distracted

Agabus: O – lovers! lovers! Lord have none of them!

Antonio: Good monk —

Agabus: O – yes, yes, yes. You'd give me gold
To pray for your two souls. (*Crossing himself.*) Not I! Not I!
Know you not love is brewed of lust and fire?
It gnaws and burns, until the Shadow – Sir,

(Searching about the air.)

Have you not seen a Shadow pass?

Antonio: A Shadow?

Agabus: Silent and cold. A-times they call him Death:
I'd have him for my brain – it shakes with fever.

(Goes searching anxiously.)

Helena: Antonio —

Antonio: You're calm?

Helena: Yes, very calm —
Of impotence – as one who in a tomb
Awakes and waits?

Antonio: He is but mad.

Helena: But mad.

Antonio: Yet fear you? still?

(A shout is heard.)

Helena: Who is it? soldiers come
From Arta?

Antonio: Yes.

Helena: And by this road! – They must
Not see us!

Antonio: No. But quick, within this breach!

(They conceal themselves in the breach. The soldiers pass across the stage. The last, as all shout "di Tocca!" strikes a column near him. It falls, and Helena starts forward shuddering.)

Helena: Fallen! Ah, fallen! See, Antonio!

Antonio: What now!

Helena (*swaying*): It is as if the earth were wind
Under my feet!

Antonio: Are all things thus become
Omen and dread to you?

Helena: O, but it is
The pillar grieving Venus leant upon
Ere to forget she leapt, and wrote,
When falls this pillar tall and proud
Let surest lovers weave their shroud.

Antonio: Mere myth!

Helena: The shroud! It coldly winds about us – coldly!

Antonio: Should a vain hap so desperately move you?

Helena: The breath and secret soul of all this night
Are burdened with foreboding! And it seems —

Antonio: You must not, Helena!

Helena: My love, my lord —
Touch me lest I forget my natural flesh
In this unnatural awe! (*He takes her to him.*)
Ah how thy arms
Warm the cold moan and misery of fear
Out of my veins!

Antonio: You rave, but in me stir
Again the attraction of these dim portents.
Nay, quiver not! 'tis but a passing mist,
And this that runs in us is worthless dread!

Helena: But ah, the shroud! the shroud!

Antonio: We'll weave no shroud,
But wedding robes and wreaths and pageantry!
And you shall be my Sappho – but through joys
Such as shall legend ecstasy about
Our knitted names when distant lovers dream.

Helena: I'll fear no more, then —

Antonio: Yet?

Helena: My lord, let us
Unloose this strangling secrecy and be
Open in love. My brother, Hæmon, let
Our hearts betrothed exchange and hope be told
Him and thy father!

Antonio: This cannot be – now

Helena: It cannot be, and you a god? I'll bow
Before your eyes no more! – say that it can!

Antonio: Not yet – not now. Hæmon's suspicious, quick,

And melancholy: must be won with service.
And you are Greek, a name till yesterday
I never knew pass in the portal to
My father's ear, but it came out his mouth
Headlong and dark with curses.

Helena: Yet of late
He oft has smiled upon me as he passed.

Antonio: On you – my father? O, he only dreamt,
And saw you not.

Helena: Then have you also dreamt!
He looked as you, when, moonlight in my hair,
You call me —

Antonio: Stay: I'll call you so no more.

Helena: You'll call me so no more?

Antonio: No more.

Helena: Why do
You say so – is it kind?

Antonio: Why? – why? Because
Words were they miracles of beauty could
As little reveal you as a taper's ray
The lone profundity and space of night!

Helena: And yet —

Antonio: And yet?

Helena: I'll hold you not too false
If sometimes they trip out upon your lips.

Antonio: Or to my father's eye?

Helena: If he but look
Upon me for thy sake.

Antonio: He smiled, you say?

Helena: Gently, as one might in forgetting pain.

Antonio: Perhaps: for some unwonted softness seems
Near him. But yesterday he called for song,
Dancing and wine.

Helena: Then tell him! These are years
So dyed in crime that secrecy must seem
Yoke-mate of guilt.

Antonio: Fear has bewitched you – shame!

Helena: Antonio, love's wave has cast us high
I would do all lest now it turn to fate
Under our feet and draw us out —

Antonio: 'Twill not!

Enter Paula

Paula: My lady, some one comes.

Helena: And is the world
Not space enough but he must needs come here!
If it were – ?

Antonio: Hæmon? – 'Twere perhaps not ill.

Helena: I know not! Broodings smoulder from his moods
Feverous bitter.

Antonio: Kindness then shall quench them.
But now, away. Forget this dread and be you
By day my lark, by night my nightingale,
Not a sad bird of boding!

Helena: With the day

All will be well.

Antonio: Remember then you are
Only a little slept from your life's shore
Out on the infinite of love, whose air
Is awe and mystery.

Helena: I go, my lord.
Think of me oft!

Antonio (*taking her in his arms*): My Helena!

(*She goes with Paula. He steps aside and watches the approaching forms.*)

'Tis Hæmon!
My father!

Enter Charles friendly, with Hæmon

Charles: So, no farther? you'll stop here?

Hæmon: Sir, if you grant it. I —

Charles (*twittingly*): Some rendezvous?
Who is she? Ah, young blood and Spring and night!

Hæmon: No rendezvous, my lord.

Charles: Some lay then you
Would muse on?

Hæmon: Yes, a lay.

Charles: And one of love?
The word, you see, founts easy to my lips.
(*With confidential archness.*) 'Tis recent in my thought — as you will
learn.

Hæmon: How, sir, and when?

Charles: O, when? Be not surprised! —
Well, to the lay!

(*He goes.*)

Hæmon: Cruel! His soldiers waste

The bread of honesty, the hope of age!
Are drunken, bloody, indolent, and lust
To tear all innocence away and robe
Our loveliest in shame! – Yet me, a Greek,
He suddenly befriends!

Antonio (*coming forward*): Hæmon —

Hæmon: Ah, you?

Antonio: There's room between your tone and courtesy.

Hæmon: And shall be while I'm readier to bend
Over a beggar's pain than prince's fingers.

Antonio: And yet you know me better —

Hæmon: Than to believe
You're not Antonio, son of Charles di Tocca?

Antonio: I'd be your friend.

Hæmon: So would he: and he smiles.

Antonio: There are deep reasons for it.

Hæmon: With him too!
Against a miracle, you are his heir!

Antonio: I think it would be well for you to listen.
My confidence once curbed —

Hæmon: May bite and paw?
Let it! for fools are threats, and cowards. Were
You Tamerlane and mine the skull should cap
A bloody pyramid of enemies,
I'd – !

Antonio: Hear me. Will you be so blind?

Hæmon: To your
Fair graces? No, my lord – not so. Your sword
And doublet are sublimely worn! sublimely!
Your curls would tempt an empress' fingers, and —

Antonio: Why is my anger silent?

Hæmon: Let it speak
And not this subtle pride! You would be friend,

A friend to me – a friend! – Did not your father
Into a sick and sunless keep cast mine
Because he was a Greek and still a Greek,
And would not be a slave? His cunning has
Not whispered death about him as a pest?
He – he, my friend? and you? – And I on him
Should lean, and flatter – ?

Antonio: Cease: though he has stains
The times are tyrannous and men like beasts
Find mercy preservation's enemy.
You're heated with suspicion and old wrong,
But take my hand as pledge —

Hæmon (*refusing it*): That you'll be false?

Enter Bardas

Bardas: I've sought you, Hæmon. Antonio? We are
Well met then: to your doors my want was bent
With a request.

Antonio: Which gladly I shall hear
And if I can will grant.

Bardas: My haste is blunt —
As is my tongue.

Hæmon: Then yield it us at once,
Our mood is so.

Bardas: Hæmon, I love your sister.
Not love: I am idolatrous before
Her foot's least print, and cannot breathe or pray
But where she's sometime been and left a heaven!

Hæmon: Therefore you'll cry it maudlin at the streets?

Bardas: Necessity's not over delicate.
Antonio, sue for me. You have been apt
In all love's skill they say. My oath on it
Your words once sown upon her listening
Would not lie fruitless did they bid her yield
More than her most.

Hæmon: Bardas! Do you – Does such
Unseemliness run in your thought?

Bardas: Peace, Hæmon.
Antonio, speak.

Antonio: You're strange in this request.
Helena, whom I've seen, would little thank
The eyes that told her own where they should love.

Bardas: I saved your life, my lord.

Antonio: And I've besought
Occasion oft for loaning of some chance
Worthily to repay you. If 'tis this,
I am distress. I cannot plead your suit.

Bardas: You cannot or you will not?

Antonio: I have said.
Ask me for service on your foes, for gold,
Faith or devotion, friendship you're aloof to,
For all that will and honor well may render
With nicety, and I'll be wings and heart,
More – drudge to your desire.

Hæmon: Nobly, my lord!
Bardas, you must atone —

Bardas: Peace, Hæmon.

Hæmon: Peace
Is goad and gall! Why do you burn my cheek
With this indignity?

Bardas: Do you ask why? (*to Antonio.*)
A little since one of your father's guard
Gave his command in seal to Helena
Upon the streets, to instantly repair
Unto his halls – which she must henceforth *honor*.
You knew it not?

Antonio: My father?

Bardas: O, well feigned.
Be sure none will suspect he is too old
For knightly feat like this – and that he has
A son!

Antonio: To Helena! my father! sealed!

Hæmon: Bardas, you bring the truth? – And so, my lord,
You stab me through another – you, my *friend*?

Antonio (*to* Bardas): Do you mean that – ?

Bardas: Until this hour I held
The race of Charles di Tocca bold, or other
But empty of all lies in deed or speech,
It grows – a little low?

Antonio: Why you are mad!
Are mad! I'm naked of this thing, and hide
No guilt behind the wonder of my face.
For Paradises brimming with all Beauty
I would not lay one fancy's weight of shame
On her you name!

Bardas: A pretty protest – but
A breath too heavenly.

Antonio: Leave sneering there!
You have repaid yourself – cast on me words
Intolerable more than loss of life.
You both shall learn this night's entangling.
But know, between her, Helena, and shame
I burn with flaming heart and fearless hand!

(*Goes angrily.*

Hæmon: He can be false and wear this mien of truth?

Bardas: I'll not believe!

Hæmon: But, what: my sister seized?

Bardas: Ah, what! – "He burns with flaming heart!" – have we
No flesh to understand this passion then?
Bound to the wings of wide ambition he
Will choose undowered worth? – To the ordeal
Of mere suspicion's flaming I'd not trust
The fairness of his name; but doubts in me
Are sunk with proofs.

Hæmon: No, no!

Bardas: Unyielding.

Hæmon: Proof?

He could not. No! he dare not!

Bardas: Yet the rogue
Cecco, the duke's half-seneschal, half-spy,
I passed upon the streets o'ermuch in wine,
Leaning upon a tipsier jade and spouting
With drunken mockery,

"Sweet Helena! Fair Helena! Pluck me, wench, but the lord Antonio knows sound nuts! And sly! Why hear you now! he gets the duke to seize on the maid! The fox! The rat! Have I not heard him in his chamber these thirty nights puff her name out his window with as many honeyed drawls of passion as – as – as – June has buds? 'Sweet Helena!' – la! 'Fair Helena!' – O! 'Dear Helena! my rose! my queen! my sun and moon and stars! Thy kiss is still at my lips, thy breast beats still on mine! my Helena!' – Um! Oh, 'tmust be a rare damsel. I'll make a sluice between her purse and mine, wench; do you hear?"

Hæmon: Well – well?

Bardas: No more. When I had struck him down,
He swore it was unswerving all and truth.
Hasting to warn I found Helena ta'en
And sought you here.

Hæmon (*grasping his brows*): Ah!

Bardas: Helena who is
All purity!

Hæmon: Ah sister, child! – Have I
With strength been father and with tenderness
A mother been to her unfolding years
But to see now unchastest cruelty
Pluck her white bloom to ease his idle sense
One fragrant hour? – If it be so, no flowers
Should blossom; only weeds whose withering
Can hurt no heart!

Bardas: These tears should seal fierce oaths
Against him!

Hæmon: And they shall! until God wrecks
Him in the tempest raised of his outrage!

Bardas: Then may I be the rock on which he breaks!
But hear; who comes? (*Revellers are heard approaching.*)
We must aside until
This mirth is past. (*They conceal themselves.*)

Enter revellers dressed as bacchanals and bacchantes, dancing and singing

Bacchus, hey! was a god, hei-yo!
The vine! a fig for the rest!
With locks green-crowned and lips red-warm —
The vine! the vine's the best!
He loved maids, O-o-ay! hei-yo!
The vine! a maiden's breast!
He pressed the grape, and kissed the maid! —
The cuckoo builds no nest!

(All go dancing, except Lydia and Phaon, who clasps and kisses her passionately)

Lydia (*breaking from him*): Do you think kisses are so cheap? You must know mine fill my purse! A pretty gallant from Naples, with laces and silks and jewels gave me this ring last year for but one. And another lover from Venice gave me this (*a bracelet*) – but he looked so sad when he gave it. Ah, his eyes! I'd not have cared if he had given me naught.

Phaon: Here, here, then! (*Offers jewel.*)

Lydia (*putting it aside*): They say the ladies in Venice ride with their lovers through the streets all night in boats: and the very moon shines more passionately there. Is it true?

Phaon: Yes, yes. But kiss me, Lydia! Take this jewel – my last. Be mine to-night, no other's! We'll prate of Venice another time.

Lydia: Another time we'll prate of kisses. I'll not have the jewel.

Phaon: Not have it! Now you're turning nun! a soft and virgin, silly nun! With a gray gown to hide these shoulders that – shall I whisper it?

Lydia: Devil! they're not! A nice lover called them round and fair last night. And I've been sick! And – I – cruel! cruel! cruel! (*Revellers are heard returning.*) There, they're coming.

Phaon: Never mind, my girl. But you mustn't scorn a man's blood when it's afire.

Re-enter Revellers singing

Bacchus, hey! was a god, hei-yo! etc.

(After which all go, except Zoe and Basil.)

Zoe: O! O! O! but 'tis brave! Wine, Basil! Wine, my knight, my Bacchus! Ho! ho! my god! you wheeze like a cross-bow. Is it years, my wooer, years? – Ah! (*She sighs.*)

Basil: Sighs – sighs! Now look for showers.

Zoe: Basil – you were my first lover – except the duke Charles. Ah, did you see how that Helena looked when they gave her the duke's command? I was like that once. (*Hæmon starts forward.*)

Basil: Fiends, nymphs and saints! it's come! tears in your eyes! Zoe, stop it. Would you have mine leak and drive me to a monastery for shelter!

Zoe (*sings sadly and absently*):
She lay by the river, dead,

A broken reed in her hand
A nymph whom an idle god had wed
And led from her maidenland.

Basil: O, had I been born a heathen!

Zoe: He told me, Basil, I should live, a great lady, at his castle. And they should kiss my hand and courtesy to me. He meant but jest – I feared. – I feared! But – I loved him!

Basil: Now, my damsel – !

Zoe (*sings*):
The god was the great god Jove,
Two notes would the bent reed blow,
The one was sorrow, the other love
Enwove with a woman's woe.

Basil: Songs and snakes! Give me instead a Dominican's funeral! I'd as lief crawl bare-kneed to Rome and mouth the Pope's heel. O blessed Turks with their remorseless harems! – Zoe!

Zoe (*sings*):
She lay by the river dead;
And he at feasting forgot.
The gods, shall they be disquieted
By dread of a mortal's lot?

(She wipes her eyes, trembles, looks at him and laughs hysterically.)

Bacchus! my Bacchus! with wet eyes! Up, up, lad! there's many a cup for us yet!

(They go, she leading and singing.

He loved maids, O-o-ay! hei-yo!
The vine! a maiden's breast! etc.

(*Hæmon and Bardas look at each other, then start after them terribly moved.*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

Scene.—An audience hall in the castle of Charles di Tocca; the next afternoon. The dark stained walls have been festooned with vines and flowers. On the left is the ducal throne. On the right sunlight through high-set windows. In the rear heavily draped doors. Enter Charles, who looks around and smiles with subtle content, then summons a servant.

Enter servant

Charles: The princess Fulvia.

Servant: She comes, sir, now.

(Goes.

Enter Fulvia

Fulvia: My lord, flowers and vines upon these walls
That seem always in dismal memory
And mist of grief? What means it?

Charles: That sprung up,
A greedy multitude upon the fields,
Citron and olive were left hungry, so
I quelled them!

Fulvia: Magic ever dwells in flowers

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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