

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

SYNOPSIS

After the assassination of Julius Caesar, his great nephew, adopted son and heir, Octavius, rises to power at the age of nineteen. Together Octavius, the war hero Mark Antony and Lepidus are appointed as a Triumvirate to reinstate the ideals of and rule the Roman Republic.

Antony is in love with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt ex-lover and mother of Julius Caesar's only son, and is living a life of luxury and self-indulgence at her court in Alexandria. Antony's neglect of his military responsibilities and a war waged on Octavius Caesar by Antony's wife Fulvia caused a scandal and is the talk of Rome.

News of Fulvia's death and the popular uprising of Pompey, son of Julius Caesar's former rival, Pompey the Great, force Antony to return to Rome and resume his responsibilities.

When pressured into cementing the alliance with Octavius by marrying Octavia, his recent widowed sister, Antony agrees.

Enobarbus, Antony's friend and comrade-in-arms foresees that Antony will not be able to break with Cleopatra. Back in Egypt, the news of Antony's marriage sends Cleopatra into a jealous tirade.

The Triumvirate negotiates a treaty with the rebel, Pompey, and the peace agreement is celebrated with a feast.

Antony and Octavia leave for Athens. Then Antony finds out that not only has Octavius attacked Pompey, but that he has spoken scornfully of Antony in public and has had Lepidus imprisoned on dubious charges and then killed.

Octavia persuades Antony to allow her to negotiate a truce with her brother. Antony returns secretly to Alexandria to join Cleopatra.

News arrives in Rome that Antony and Cleopatra have crowned themselves and their children kings and queens in Alexandria. This, coupled with Antony's desertion of Octavia infuriates Caesar and he declares war on Egypt and Antony.

Antony's decision to fight Caesar at sea at Actium ends in disaster. He deserts the battle to follow Cleopatra's fleeing ship, and is shamed and consumed with despair. On hearing that Octavius has offered to make a secret treaty with Cleopatra, he engages in a second battle ending in victory.

On the evening of the third battle, Antony's soldiers are unnerved by fear and bad omens. Even the faithful Enobarbus deserts him and sides with Octavius.

The Egyptian fleet finally surrenders and Antony, in his fury, accuses Cleopatra of betraying him to Octavius. Fearing for her life, she flees to her monument and, hoping to bring him round, sends a false report that she is dead. On hearing this, Antony attempts suicide and is brought to Cleopatra's monument to die in her arms.

To escape the humiliation of imprisonment and enslavement by the Romans, Cleopatra kills herself.

Octavius returns as victor to Rome. The republic is no more and the Roman Empire under Octavius Caesar begins.