The "fly-killing" scene in *Titus Andronicus* (3.2)


The *Norton* 3rd ed., true to its "single-text policy," prints only the quarto text (1594). In the Folio text (1623), the play has an additional scene, 3.2, in which the Andronici act out their woes so far. The editors say, "Shakespeare probably wrote the fly-killing scene at a later date for a revival of the play."

Read it closely. How consistent is it with the text of the play you know?
... and let her go in. Come, brother; take a lead,
And in this hand the other will I bear.
And Lavinia, thou shalt be employed.
Bear thou my hand, sweet Theba, between thine arms.
As for thee, boy, go get thee from my sight.
Thou art an exile and thou must not stay.
Hie to the Goths, and raise an army there,
And if ye love me, as I think you do,
Let's kiss and part, for we have much to do.

[They kiss.] Exeunt [all but Lucius].

LUCIUS Farewell, Andronicus, my noble father,
The woefull man that ever lived in Rome.
Farewell, Andronicus, fare you well again.
He loves thy life, and yet detests it.
That ever death should let life bear his name.
Where life hath no more interest but to breathe.

[LAVIDIA kisses TITUS.]

TITUS Alas, poor heart, that kiss is comfortless
As frozen water to a starved snake.

TITUS When will this fearful slumber have an end?

TITUS Now farewell, flatltery, dide, Andronicus.
Thou dost not slumber. See thy two sons' heads,
Thy warlike hand, thy mangled daughter here,
Thy other banished son with this dear sight
Struck pale and bloodyless, and thy brother, I,
Even like a styne image, cold and numb.
Ah, now no more will I control the griefs.
Rend off thy silver hair, thy other head.
What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?

MARCUS At that that I have killed, my lord—a fly.

TITUS Out on thee, murderer! Thou kill'st my heart.

MARCUS Alas, my lord, I have but killed a fly.

TITUS 'But? How if that fly had a father, brother?

MARCUS Pardon me, sir, it was a black ill-favoured fly;

TITUS O, O, O!

TITUS Then pardon them for reprehending thee,

MARCUS For thou hast done a charitable deed.

TITUS Give me thy knife. I will insult on't, as it was the Moor:

MARCUS Flatter me and stifle it; weep no more.

TITUS Come, take away: Lavinia, go with me.

YOUNG LUCIUS Help, grand sire, help! My aunt Lavinia

TITUS Enter TITUS and MARCUS

Enter LUCIUS, son and LAVINIA running after him, and the boy flies from her with his books under his arm.

YOUNG LUCIUS Help, grand sire, help! My aunt Lavinia

MARCUS Alas, the tender boy in passion moved

TITUS Peace, tender sapling, thou art made of tears.

MARCUS strikes the dish with a knife.

1. Sight were thought to draw blood from the heart.
2. Oah a term of ornament.
3. In Vidal's Arnold 2, Aeneas tells Dido the story of Troy's fall.
4. Mixed with water, like beer for brewing.
5. Pleading myself with the thought that...
6. Such is, here to protect me.
7. Location: Titus's garden.