

CLEOPATRA

Synopsis



Young naïve Cleopatra plays hide-and-seek with her carefree companion, Romulus (a eunuch), when a more somber eunuch, Ganymedes, informs her that her pharaoh father has just poisoned himself on the journey back from Rome. The pharaoh's harem girls realize with the pharaoh's passing, they're more or less out of a job. (**Lament for Auletes**) Later, Cleopatra realizes with growing worry what a rotten mess her father has made out of Egypt and vows to rescue her country (**What Do I See?**) She realizes she must finagle a navy out of Caesar, but she hasn't the vaguest idea how to do it. Her two eunuchs suggest that she seduce Caesar, but Cleopatra hasn't the vaguest idea how to do that, either. So the eunuchs take it upon themselves to teach Cleopatra the art of seduction (eunuch-style). (**A Man is Just a Man**) But when it becomes clear to Cleopatra that her newfound charms aren't working on Caesar, she comes clean, confessing she's new at seduction and politics and she's entirely at Caesar's mercy. Caesar finds her honesty refreshing, and strikes a bargain with Cleopatra. He's in need of an heir. If she can supply him with an heir, he will supply her with a navy. (**You're Not**) Hoping to allay her fears about lovemaking, Cleopatra turns to the harem girls who give her what little comfort they can. (**The First Time**) Meanwhile, Caesar himself examines his own doubts about growing old and politically weak. (**The Weight of the World**). Cleopatra confronts her dangerous unexpected passion for Caesar's adjutant, Marc Antony (**The Weight of the World - reprise**), who is equally frightened of his growing obsession for Cleopatra (**Behind the Door**). In the months that follow, Caesar grows increasingly impatient for Cleopatra to bear him a son, forcing her out of desperation to turn to Antony as a surrogate. (**Behind the Door - Reprise**) Caesar makes plans to return to Rome. Hoping to hitch a ride on the boat back with him, Romulus fantasizes about beginning a new life in Rome, though Ganymedes is terrified of how the Romans would receive them. (**Eunuchs in Tunics**) After Cleopatra bears a son, she is outraged at Caesar's demand that the child be raised in Rome, not in Egypt. Caesar warns the eunuchs to keep their pharaoh in tow. (**Betrayed**). Numbed by Caesar's threats, Cleopatra faces the necessity of closing her heart off to her own son. She realizes that Egypt needs a pharaoh, not a mother, and it breaks her heart. (**I Won't Open My Heart to You**)

As Cleopatra's personal and military power grows, Caesar demands of Antony that he pillage Egypt and assassinate Cleopatra. (**She Was**) Meanwhile, the youngest harem girl has befriended Cleopatra, who asks about her son, before Caesar took him prisoner in Rome. (**That's What Children Do**) The oldest harem girl, nearing death, pays the other harem girl for an exaggeratedly comic lament for her wasted life. (**As Good As It Gets**). On a warship headed for Egypt, Antony is torn between his loyalty to Caesar, and his love for Cleopatra. (**Closer**). Cleopatra rages at both the Romans, who have each betrayed her. (**What Are Men About?**) Many things now happen at once: Caesar is assassinated; the oldest harem girl dies; Antony attacks Egypt; Romulus leaves Ganymedes for Rome; and Cleopatra gets news that her son has been poisoned. (**Until It's Gone**) Emotionally-shutdown Cleopatra refuses to see Antony. Antony uses his own navy to conquer Egypt's ancestral lands, which he presents to Cleopatra as a gift. It is only when Cleopatra realizes that she has obtained everything she set out to achieve on behalf of Egypt that she allows herself to succumb to Antony's feelings of love. (**One Perfect Moment**) Romulus returns from Rome, bloodied and broken, a victim of xenophobia against Egyptians. (**Eunuchs' Lament**) Rome now finds Cleopatra too dangerous, and blames her for corrupting Antony and taking him away from Rome, leaving civil war in his wake. Cleopatra realizes that her eunuchs have intentions to poison Antony. In order to protect Antony, and in order to spare Egypt a war, she takes matters in her own hands, and takes the poison herself, extracting from Antony a promise that he return to Rome with the announcement that he himself has killed Cleopatra, thereby averting war. Antony makes that promise, and Cleopatra dies in his arms. (**One Perfect Moment - Reprise**)