

CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA

A Dramatic Reading

by
George Bernard Shaw



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From the play, "Caesar and Cleopatra."

The Man comes, by moonlight, to the great Sphinx in the desert.

MAN: Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Caesar! I have wandered in many lands, seeking the company of creatures such as I myself but I have found no other Caesar, no man who can do my day's deed, and think my night's thought. In the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert; only I wander, and you sit; I conquer, and you endure. These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar, signalling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below; and here at last is their sentinel--alone in the silver desert. O Sphinx, I am he of whose genius you are the symbol; part brute, part woman, and part god--nothing of man in me at all. Have I read your riddle, Sphinx?

The girl has wakened and peeps from her nest in the Sphinx' shoulder.

GIRL: Old gentleman.

CAESAR: (Starting violently and clutching his sword) Immortal gods!

GIRL: Old gentleman, don't run away.

CAESAR: (Stupefied) "Old gentleman, don't run away!!!" This! to Julius Caesar! Sphinx, you presume on your centuries. I am younger than you, though your voice is but a girl's voice as yet.

GIRL: Climb up here, quickly; or the Romans will come and eat you.

CAESAR: (Running forward and seeing her. Amazed) Who are you?

GIRL: Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt.

CAESAR: Queen of the Gypsies, you mean.

CLEOPATRA: You must not be disrespectful to me, or the Sphinx will let the Romans eat you. Come up. It is quite cozy here.

CAESAR: (To himself) What a dream! What a magnificent dream!

He starts to climb up to her.

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