

# **BOADICEA: A TRAGEDY**

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Boadicea: a tragedy by Sir Coutts Lindsay

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**SIR COUTTS LINDSAY**

**BOADICEA:  
A TRAGEDY**



# BOADICEA.

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## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

*A Druidical Circle of stones in the midst of a broken, woody country, flanked by a range of hills — A funeral pile, on which lie the remains of PRASUTAGUS, King of the Iceni — Time, sunset. — BELAUNUS, HODA, HODEIRA, kinsmen to Prasutagus; subjects, Druids, &c. &c.*

BELAUNUS.

Hearken, ye kith and kindred of the dead!  
Let the twelve nearest of his blood approach,  
And break the funeral meats. Hodeira, first,  
Being first of kindred, stand upon the right,  
Beside the dead King's knee. Hoda, thou there  
Upon the left—thou wert his dearest friend,  
And nearest to his heart while yet he breathed,  
Therefore be near it still. Thou, Galgacus,  
Wilt by Hodeira stand, next of his kin;  
His nephew's children there, the sons of Guenn,  
And Deirdre's offspring; the two sons of Rhea,  
His concubine, stand next, and Gododin;  
The shepherd Orbo then, kin to his blood,  
And Glead, his foster-brother. Seat yourselves  
Upon the earth.

[*They seat themselves.*]

Bring here the bread and wine.

[*Bread and wine are brought. BELAUNUS takes of both; fills a cup, and raises it towards the funeral pile.*]

King! rise and drink!

[*They offer the dead King wine.*]

DRUID (*from the pile*).

The King will drink no more.

BELAUNUS,

(*casting the wine into the air*).

Take it then, air, and trouble not his spirit.  
King, rise and eat!

[*They offer the dead King bread.*]

DRUID (*from the pile*).

The King will eat no more.

BELAUNUS.

Take it then, earth, and let his ashes rest.

[*Crumbles the bread on the ground.*]

Nearest of kin, arise and drink the wine.

HODEIRA.

Hail, King and brother, this I drink to thee!

BELAUNUS.

Pass on the cup; take it, thou next of blood.

HODA.

Hail, King and friend! Friend of my soul, farewell!  
In better worlds may thy good spirit reign!

KINSMEN (*one after the other*).

Hail, Father! Hail, Father!

BELAUNUS.

Pass on the bread.

HODA.

We have all eat and drunk.

BELAUNUS.

Ye sons of Deirdre,  
And ye of Rhea, take the bread and wine,  
And serve the guests and kindred ; let not one  
Go away craving, and so slight the dead ;  
Let all be filled.

*[Exeunt SONS OF DEIRDRE and RHEA, to distribute food to the crowd. BELAUNUS and the Druids continue the funeral rites. HODA and HODEIRA advance.]*

HODA.

Dost thou go hence to-night ?

HODEIRA.

I journey with the Queen.

HODA.

And it may be  
She bide a day or two ere she set forth ?

HODEIRA.

That is her present purpose.

HODA.

Doth Orbo leave to-night ?

HODEIRA.

For Mona, yes.

HODA.

With the unquiet rumour in his ears  
That Rome hath fixed her greedy eyes on Mona.  
'Twill prove a bloody spur to his poor steed ;  
For, when most temperate, the youth rides hard,  
And such news scald.

HODEIRA.

'Tis true. How runs thy mind  
On the King's will ?

HODA.

That caution founders age  
More certainly than rashness trips up youth.  
'Twas an ill testament that cleft  
A living kingdom into quivering halves,  
And gave a part, one bleeding half, as sop  
To stay the Roman appetite for all.  
'Twill bring a curse on us, and on our children.

HODEIRA.

Avert it, God !

HODA.

That he hath left his daughters  
Co-heiresses with Rome, hastens the swoop  
Of the fell bird. That he hath left his widow  
The guardian to his children, doth ensure  
War to hell's gates.



HODEIRA.

It may be so ; indeed  
I've seen the headlong passion flush her brow  
With a most lurid and tempestuous red.  
Still to the King she gave a noble duty ;  
Altho' their great disparity of years,  
And her full beauty, might have licensed her  
In seeking to rule him.

HODA.

Her whole of being  
Is nobly toned ; she honoured the dead King  
With a most absolute respect of duty,  
And ruled herself by him ; but I have seen her  
Like to a burning mountain, unapproachable.

HODEIRA.

And this late testament ?

HODA.

Is wormwood to her ;  
Yet, for it comes from him, she will accept it.

BELAUNUS (*from the pile*).

Summon the Queen.

HODEIRA.

Thou speak'st sad truth ; the root is in the soil  
That shall fill Britain with a noxious weed,  
Deadly to man and beast.

Some fitter season, when thou goest hence,  
I will accompany thee a league or two ;  
An', by God's grace, we may concert some course  
To stave off near disaster.

HODA.

As you will.

'Twill be a bitter windy fall of night,  
If I read well the language of the sky.

HODEIRA.

Night comes apace ; behind the forest, swift,  
The sun descends.

HODA.

He sinketh fast indeed,  
And with a mournful splendour,—so doth sink  
A failing empire ; above his fiery orb  
Vast piles of vapour culminate and press,  
Which through the day have gathered in his rear,  
And now o'erwhelm him.

HODEIRA.

Even so, he's gone,  
And leaves a fading glory.

HODA.

Such a twilight  
O'er shades our land ; upon the general weal  
Darkness sinks down,—would its cavernous gloom  
Were, like the temporal dimness of the heavens,  
By a sure dawning limited with light !

But who shall say what cycle bringeth round  
Our day again? 'Tis far remote—none here,  
Nor their sons' sons, shall e'er behold its beams.

HODEIRA.

What dost thou brood o'er? whither wanders now  
Thy vagrant spirit?

HODA.

Far out beyond the day;  
After the sun, into yon golden world  
Whither he hastens. Would I were gone hence!

HODEIRA.

Be not impatient. With this service ends  
The youthful fealty of our best years.  
Henceforth our duty must devolve on those  
Beside whose younger aspect ours is gray;  
We take the post of age,—for our old guides  
Have ceas'd from out the thoroughfares of life,  
And no more beckon to us from the van.  
Our old King now is shrivelled to a husk,  
Nor can his presence challenge as of yore,  
The knee of duty or obedience mute.

HODA.

He hath gone home after the day's turmoil,  
And sleeps secure through the still lapse of time.  
Would I were gone!

HODEIRA.

Your thoughts precede you home,  
To look upon the bright eyes of your child.