



# SPOILER

## Théophile Gautier, *One of Cleopatra's Nights*

As Cleopatra dances for Meïamoun, a slave brings him the poisonous draught he will eventually have to take. Straightaway he bravely raises it to his lips, and we see suddenly an innocence in Cleopatra. She has an open heart beneath her harsh queenly exterior, and she tries to prevent him from drinking the poison so they can spend more time together. But in the space of a single tear– the only one she ever shed– the moment is gone: Mark Antony is heard entering the chamber, the young hunter takes the drink and falls dead, and Cleopatra shakes the softness from her as she welcomes the Roman and fabricates an explanation for the corpse– she was merely testing out a poison.



