

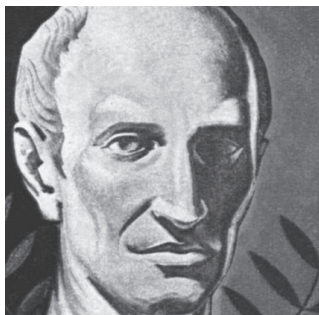


CORE CLASSICS

ABRIDGED FOR YOUNG READERS

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

by

William Shakespeare

CORE CLASSICS®

EDITOR FOR THIS VOLUME
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INTRODUCTION

Julius Caesar lived in Rome more than 2,000 years ago. He is remembered as a brilliant military leader who expanded Rome's territories. We remember him, however, not only for his extraordinary life, but also for the manner of his death.

Caesar was so powerful that some of his fellow Romans saw him as a threat to the Roman Republic. They worried that he wanted to make himself a godlike king of Rome. To prevent this, they assassinated him in the Roman Senate House on the fifteenth of March in the year 44 BCE.

More than 1,600 years later, the great English poet and playwright William Shakespeare wrote *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare focused his drama on the small group of Romans who plotted to kill Caesar—in particular, on two of the leading conspirators, Caius Cassius and Marcus Brutus.

Because Shakespeare's play is a tragedy, you know it will not end happily. A tragedy usually presents a heroic but flawed central character

whose actions lead to unforeseen and sorrowful consequences. You might think that the central character of a play titled *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* would be Caesar himself. But that is not the case. In Shakespeare's play, Brutus emerges as the central tragic figure.

Brutus is drawn into the murderous conspiracy by his friend, Cassius. Although Brutus has long been a friend of Caesar, when the terrible moment comes, he thrusts his dagger into Caesar's body. If you were to ask why he killed his friend, Brutus would answer, "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."

In the mid-19th century, an American actor, John Wilkes Booth, was obsessed by the character of Brutus. Booth saw Brutus as Brutus saw himself—as a defender of freedom against tyranny. In April 1865, Booth shot and killed President Abraham Lincoln, while the president was watching a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Booth thought of himself as another Brutus, and of Lincoln as another tyrannical Caesar who had to be stopped.

To see Brutus as a hero of liberty against

tyranny is to see only part of the more complex picture that Shakespeare puts before us. In the play, Brutus's honor and patriotism are mixed with self-righteousness and self-deluding idealism. At the end of the play, we are left with no real hero, no clear winner or loser. Through the character of Brutus, Shakespeare shows us how political violence, even if undertaken for noble reasons, can lead to tragic results.

Keep in mind that while Shakespeare uses real historical figures as characters in his play, the play is fiction. Shakespeare invents elements of the action because he wants to tell a good story. Building on historical accounts of Caesar's assassination, Shakespeare uses his imagination to explore the complexities of human nature, to consider ideas about power and politics, and to dramatize the tensions in relationships, especially the complicated relationship between Brutus and Cassius.

This book presents a shortened version of Shakespeare's play that can be performed in a little more than an hour. While condensed, with some words changed and a few lines moved, this version of *Julius Caesar* remains true to Shakespeare,

generally using the original language. In this book, you will also find a brief account of Caesar's place in the history of ancient Rome, as well as helpful information on Shakespeare's theatre and language. Moreover, to help prepare you for both enjoying and understanding the play, this book first presents Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in the form of a brief story, following the long tradition of introducing young people to Shakespeare by re-telling his plays as stories.

Shakespeare didn't write his plays for silent reading from a book. He wrote them to be seen and heard. *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* will come to life when you gather with classmates, friends, or family members to read it aloud, or, even better, to act it out. You don't need fancy costumes or high-tech special effects. Just heed the advice of Hamlet, one of Shakespeare's greatest characters, who says that you only need to "speak the speech" naturally, letting the words help you express the emotions.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr.



THE ASSASSINATION OF CAESAR: FROM A PERFORMANCE IN
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, LONDON, ENGLAND, CA. 1900.

JULIUS CAESAR AND THE END OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Roman Republic

When Julius Caesar rose to power in the first century **BCE**, Rome was a republic—it was not ruled by a king but by elected leaders. Two leaders called *consuls* headed the Roman Republic. They held the most power. They could make laws and decide when to go to war. But one consul could overrule the other, which kept any single consul from becoming too powerful.

BCE: Before the
Common Era or
Before the Current Era

The consuls were elected to one-year terms by the *Senate*, a body of 300 male citizens. Like the consuls, the senators were *patricians*—wealthy landowners and other members of ancient Rome's highest social class.

At first the *plebeians*—the common people of Rome, such as craftworkers, shopkeepers, and the like—had almost no say in how they

were governed. Eventually the plebeians gained the right to elect *tribunes*, who represented the interests of the common people in the government of the Roman republic. Women, however, had few rights in ancient Rome. Slavery was widespread, and enslaved people had no power.

Over time, as the Roman Republic grew, so did the power of the Senate. Eventually the Senate included not only patricians but also wealthy plebeians. The Senate became the chief governing body of the republic.

The Powerful Roman Army

During its early years, the city of Rome was surrounded by enemies. The Romans had to defend themselves against outsiders who wanted to conquer their city. They pushed their enemies back, and then they began to conquer other lands and other peoples.

Because the army was so successful, Rome eventually became very rich. Great amounts of stolen riches were brought back from successful military campaigns. Over time, soldiers began to

feel more loyalty to the generals who could lead them to victory (and make them rich with the spoils of war) than they did to Rome itself.

The generals who led the army grew extremely powerful. It was just a matter of time before one of them tried to take over the republic completely. Julius Caesar was that someone.

Caesar Crosses the Rubicon

In 59 BCE, Caesar was made a consul. In the following year, he led the military campaign against Gaul, which today we know as France. In the Gallic Wars, which lasted from 58 BCE to 51 BCE, Caesar and his army were victorious.

After he had conquered Gaul, Caesar decided that he wanted to be elected consul again. But he was opposed by another powerful leader, Pompey (*POM-pee*). Caesar and Pompey had once been allies, but now Pompey saw Caesar as a threat. Caesar was told that if he wanted to be consul, he had to come to Rome for the election—and leave his army behind. Caesar knew that if he went to Rome without his army, Pompey would have him arrested.

Caesar set off for Rome—*with* his army. As they crossed the Rubicon River, the dividing line between Gaul and Italy, Caesar knew that there was no turning back. (Ever since, people have used the expression “crossing the Rubicon” for any dramatic decision from which there is no turning back.)



NO TURNING BACK: CAESAR CROSSES THE RUBICON.

Civil War Divides the Republic

Caesar's actions started a civil war, a war of Roman against Roman, in which Caesar and his supporters battled Pompey and his allies.

Caesar quickly took control of Italy, but Pompey and his army managed to escape. Caesar chased them down until the two armies clashed in Greece. Pompey was defeated and fled to Egypt, where he was killed. Caesar made his way to Egypt and defeated the remaining forces loyal to Pompey.

In 44 BCE, Caesar was made the dictator—the absolute ruler—of Rome. The role of dictator was supposed to be temporary, to help restore order in times of emergency. But Caesar did not intend to give up the power he had gained.

Caesar was **ambitious**, but he also wanted to improve Rome—for example, he established programs to employ the jobless, and he sponsored the construction of new roads and buildings. He also took steps to make sure that everyone knew he meant to be the ruler for a long

ambitious: filled with an eager desire for power, success, status, or some other goal

time. He changed the month called Quintilis to Julius (now July) in his honor. And he had the image of his face put on coins, something only kings did at this time.



Conspiracy and Assassination

Although Caesar had been an excellent general, he was not an especially good dictator. He was arrogant and offended many powerful Romans. In February of 44 BCE, Caesar had the Senate vote him dictator for life. To many members of the Senate, having a dictator for life was no different than having a king. They blamed Caesar for destroying the republic, and now they were prepared to do something about it.

A group of as many as 60 senators plotted against Caesar. The leaders of this **conspiracy** were Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius. The senators assassinated Caesar in Rome's Senate House in 44 BCE, on March 15, called the ides of

conspiracy: the act of secretly plotting together, usually to do something wrong

March. (In the ancient Roman calendar, a day in the middle of the month was known as the *ides*.)

In about 100 CE, Plutarch (*PLOO-tark*), an author famous for his biographical writings, wrote about the life of Julius Caesar. Here is how Plutarch described the scene at the assassination:

They...that had conspired [Caesar's] death compassed him in on every side with their swords drawn in their hands, that Caesar turned him nowhere but he was stricken [struck] at by some and ... was backed and mangled among them, as a wild beast taken of hunters. For it was agreed among them that every man should give him a wound... Men report also that Caesar did still defend himself against the rest... but that when he saw Brutus with his sword drawn in his hand, then he pulled his gown over his head, and made no more resistance.

That passage is from a popular English translation of Plutarch's writings, which Shakespeare relied on for much of the information he used in writing his *Tragedy of Julius Caesar*.

From Republic to Empire

After Julius Caesar's death, Rome again fell into civil war. Caesar's grand-nephew, Octavius—whom Caesar had adopted as his son—emerged victorious over his rivals, including his former ally, Mark Antony.

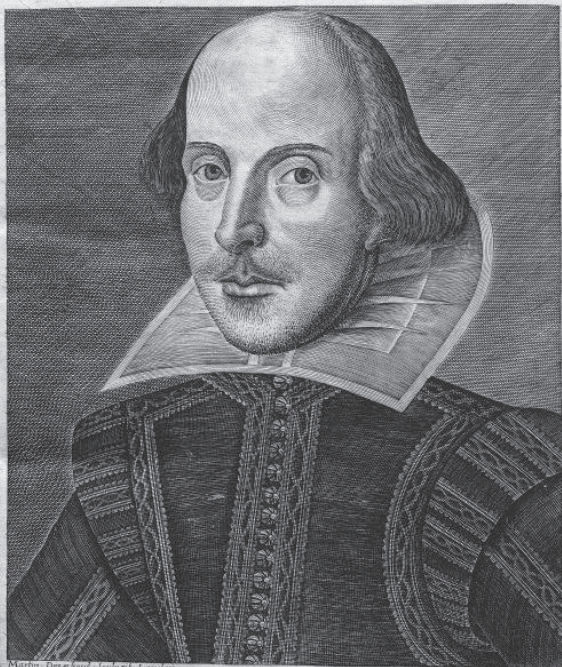
Octavius established himself as the first emperor of Rome. And so the Roman Republic became the Roman Empire, led by the emperor. The Senate continued to function, but Octavius had the final say, and his word was law.

Octavius was called Caesar Augustus. The name of Caesar came to mean “a powerful ruler” and was used as a title for later Roman emperors.



MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



L O N D O N
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

A COLLECTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, KNOWN AS THE FIRST
FOLIO, WAS PUBLISHED IN 1623.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE GLOBE

In 1564 William Shakespeare was born in England, in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, about ninety miles northwest of the great bustling city of London. Shakespeare is sometimes called the “Bard of Avon.” (*Bard* is another word for poet.)

In Shakespeare’s time, well-off boys attended school. Girls stayed home. Young Will probably spent long hours learning Latin, Greek, the Bible, and English history. It seems Will didn’t enjoy school much: in one of his plays, he described “the whining schoolboy, with his satchel . . . creeping like [a] snail unwillingly to school.”

There’s a lot about Shakespeare’s life we don’t know. Over the years scholars have examined the available evidence—there’s not much of it—and have tried to put together a picture of the playwright’s life. We do know that eighteen-year-old William married twenty-six-year-old Anne Hathaway in 1582. Over the next few years, Anne gave birth to their daughter Susanna, followed by twins, a daughter named Judith, and a son named Hamnet.

Shakespeare did not linger very long in Stratford-upon-Avon. By 1592, Shakespeare was in London and establishing a reputation as a playwright, actor, and poet.

When Shakespeare wrote his plays, England was ruled by Queen Elizabeth I and later by King James I. Elizabeth was a powerful and intelligent leader, and very popular with the English people. The arts thrived during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. She filled her court with poets, playwrights, and musicians.

Many of Shakespeare's plays were performed in the Globe Theatre, which was built in 1599 on the south bank of the Thames River in London. The Globe was a wooden, circular building with an open courtyard in the middle. The theater could hold up to 2,500 people.

At the Globe, people who didn't have much money could pay a penny to stand in the courtyard and watch the play; they were called the groundlings. Richer people could buy seats in the galleries, which were along three sides of the theater and were covered by a roof to protect the audience from the sun or a sudden rain.

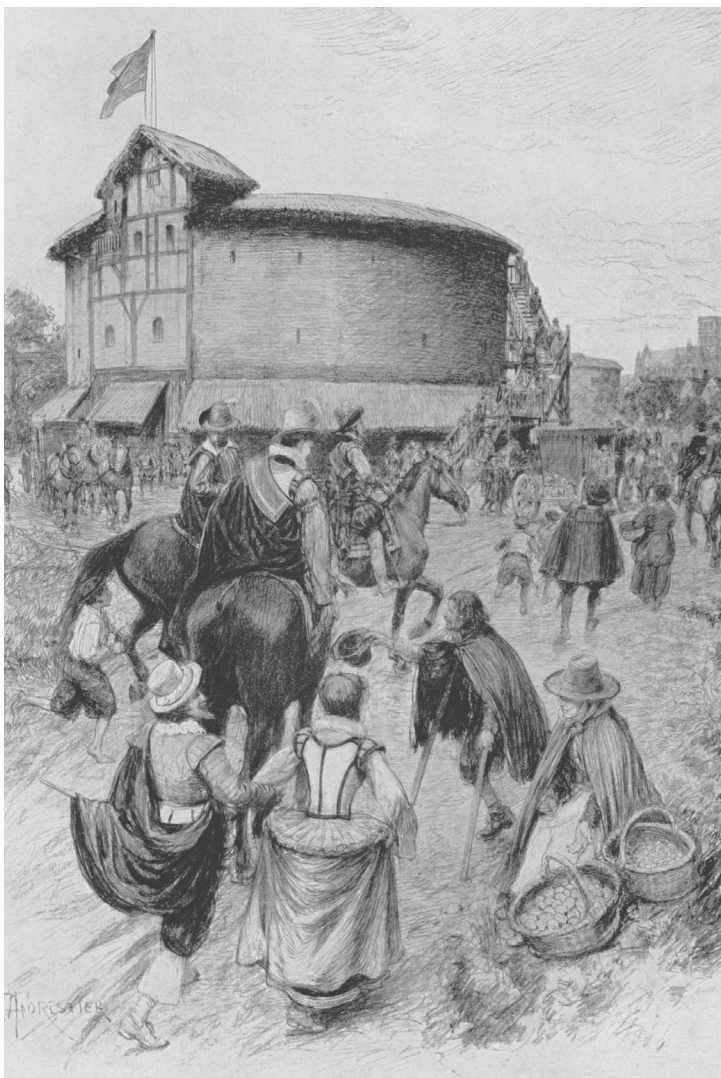
Performances were given only in daylight and only in good weather.



QUEEN ELIZABETH I

In Shakespeare's time, only men acted on stage. No women were allowed to be actors! The women's parts were played by young boys who still had high voices and no beards.

In 1613, a cannon fired as part of a performance of Shakespeare's play titled *Henry VIII* set fire to



EAGER THEATER-GOERS ARRIVE FOR A PERFORMANCE AT THE GLOBE.

the Globe's thatched roof, and the theater burned to the ground. In the 1990s the theater was rebuilt very near its original location. So, if you visit London today, you can still see a Shakespeare play at the new Globe Theatre.



BRUTUS AND PORTIA, FROM A PERFORMANCE OF *JULIUS CAESAR*
IN 1999 AT THE REBUILT GLOBE THEATRE IN LONDON

JULIUS CAESAR AND THE IDES OF MARCH

From William Shakespeare's Play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*

Here we retell key events from Shakespeare's play in the form of a brief story that includes some famous passages from the original play.

It was mid-February, time for the Feast of the **Lupercalia**, in honor of the god of fertility. Ancient Rome was in a holiday mood. Many citizens had gathered along the streets to see the great leader Julius Caesar on his way to the festival games. Some of his well-wishers had been up early, eager to celebrate Caesar's recent triumph over his enemy Pompey.

Lupercalia

(loo-puhr-KAY-lee-uh): A religious festival in ancient Rome. Also called the Lupercal (LOO-puhr-kul).

fertility: the ability to produce offspring

Many Gods and Goddesses

The god of fertility is one of only many gods and goddesses believed in by the ancient Romans. In their religious beliefs, the ancient Romans were greatly influenced by the Greeks. For example, the king of the Greek gods, Zeus, became Jupiter to the Romans.

But many citizens of Rome did not hold Caesar in such high regard, for they had known and respected Pompey. They **resented** Caesar's attempts to glorify himself, and they feared that they would lose the freedom they valued as Roman citizens if he became too powerful.

resented: felt bitter about, from a sense of having been wronged

Soon Caesar came along with a group of his closest followers, including the young officer Mark Antony. Suddenly a voice from the crowd called to Caesar. It was a soothsayer, one who predicts the future.



A SOOTHSAYER CONFRONTS CAESAR.

“Caesar!” the soothsayer cried. “Beware the ides of March.” (The ides was the fifteenth day of the month.)

“He is a dreamer,” said Caesar to his companions. “Let us leave him.”

When Caesar’s **procession** had moved out of

procession: a group moving along in an orderly and formal manner

sight, two noble citizens who knew Caesar well remained behind. Their names were Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius, and they were close

friends in spite of their very different natures.

No citizen of Rome was more patriotic than Brutus, who prided himself on being a man of honor. Being perfectly honest himself, he assumed that everyone else must be honest as well. He was more a man of books than of action. He was a friend of Caesar and respected by Caesar, but Brutus believed from the bottom of his heart that too much power in the hands of one man was a dangerous threat to the Roman idea of liberty. And so he watched Caesar with growing sadness and worry.

In contrast to the thoughtful Brutus, his friend Cassius had a quick temper. Cassius was driven by

reasons less noble than those that moved Brutus. Cassius disliked Caesar and was jealous of him.

Both Brutus and Cassius were worried about Caesar's growing power. Rome was a republic, with a Senate that helped make the laws—would Caesar's growing power threaten this way of government and the freedom of Roman citizens?

As Brutus and Cassius talked, they could hear shouts and applause for Caesar in the distance.

"What means this shouting?" Brutus asked Cassius. "I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king."

"**Ay**, do you fear it?" responded Cassius. "Then must I think you would not have it so."

ay (pronounced "eye"): yes (as used here, an expression of emphasis, like saying *indeed or really*)

"I would not," said Brutus. "And yet I love him well."

Cassius became **agitated** and spoke to Brutus. "I know you for an honorable man, Brutus," he said. "I cannot tell what you and other men think, but for myself, I am not in awe of Caesar. I was born free as Caesar. So were you!"

agitated: nervously excited



BRUTUS AND CASSIUS WATCH CAESAR'S PROCESSION.

There was another cheer from the people, and then Cassius continued: “Why, man, Caesar doth stand like a **Colossus** and we **petty** men walk around under his huge legs. In the name of all the gods, upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed, that he is grown so great?”

Colossus: a gigantic statue, such as the famous one that stood on the island of Rhodes in ancient Greece

petty: unimportant

In Cassius’s angry opinion, while Caesar might see himself as a giant among men, he was no better than his fellow citizens. Cassius’s heated words seemed to trouble Brutus. He turned to Cassius and said, “For the present, say no more. What you have said, I will consider.”

Now Caesar and his followers returned. As they passed by, something about Cassius made Caesar uneasy, and he remarked to **Antony**, “**Yond** Cassius has a **lean** and hungry look. He thinks too much. Such men as he are never at ease while they behold one greater than themselves, and therefore are they very dangerous.” Caesar saw something threatening in Cassius’s expression, but Antony assured Caesar

Antony: a shorter name for Mark Antony

yond: yonder; over there at a distance

lean: thin



ANTONY, DRESSED FOR THE RACE, OFFERS CAESAR A CROWN, WHICH CAESAR REFUSES.

that Cassius was “a noble Roman” and presented no danger. Caesar, however, was not so sure.

As Caesar and his followers walked on, Brutus and Cassius stopped their friend Casca to ask the reason for all the shouting and applause they had heard. Casca said that Mark Antony had offered a crown to Caesar three times, and that each time Caesar had refused it, which caused the people to shout their approval. “But, to my thinking,” said Casca, “he **would fain have had** it.” Cassius sensed that Casca too did not trust Caesar and feared his growing power.

would fain have had it: would willingly have taken it [the crown]

In the weeks that followed, Cassius secretly gathered a number of men who were willing to take violent steps to stop Caesar’s growing power. Among the **conspirators** were Casca, Decius, Metellus Cimber, Cinna, and Trebonius. But they still needed the support of Brutus. If Brutus were part of their plan, the conspirators thought, then their violent action might be accepted by the Roman people, because the people honored and respected Brutus.

conspirators: people secretly plotting together, usually to do something wrong

During this time, many strange signs **foretold** that something terrible was about to happen. Fire filled the skies, lions walked the streets, and a screech owl, the bird of night, hooted in the public square at midday.

foretold: predicted

One stormy day it was rumored that the Senate was planning to crown Caesar king. Late that night, Cassius, along with his fellow conspirators, made a secret visit to Brutus. Brutus agreed to join the conspirators at the Senate House the next morning—the morning of the ides of March—and there and then, they would put Caesar to death.

But Brutus did not agree when Cassius urged that they also kill Caesar's close friend, Mark Antony. "Our course will seem too bloody," said Brutus. And besides, Brutus argued, Antony posed no threat, as he spent most of his time in sports and parties.

"Yet I fear him," said Cassius, "for the love he bears to Caesar."

When Cassius and the other conspirators left Brutus, it was a few hours after midnight. Brutus was troubled. To his surprise, his wife, Portia, approached him. "Brutus," she said, "last night

at supper you suddenly rose and walked about, **mus**ing and sighing. And when I asked you what the matter was, you stared upon me with **un**gentle looks. Tell me the cause of your grief.”

musing: thinking deeply

ungentle: harsh; unkind

“I am not well in health, and that is all,” answered Brutus.

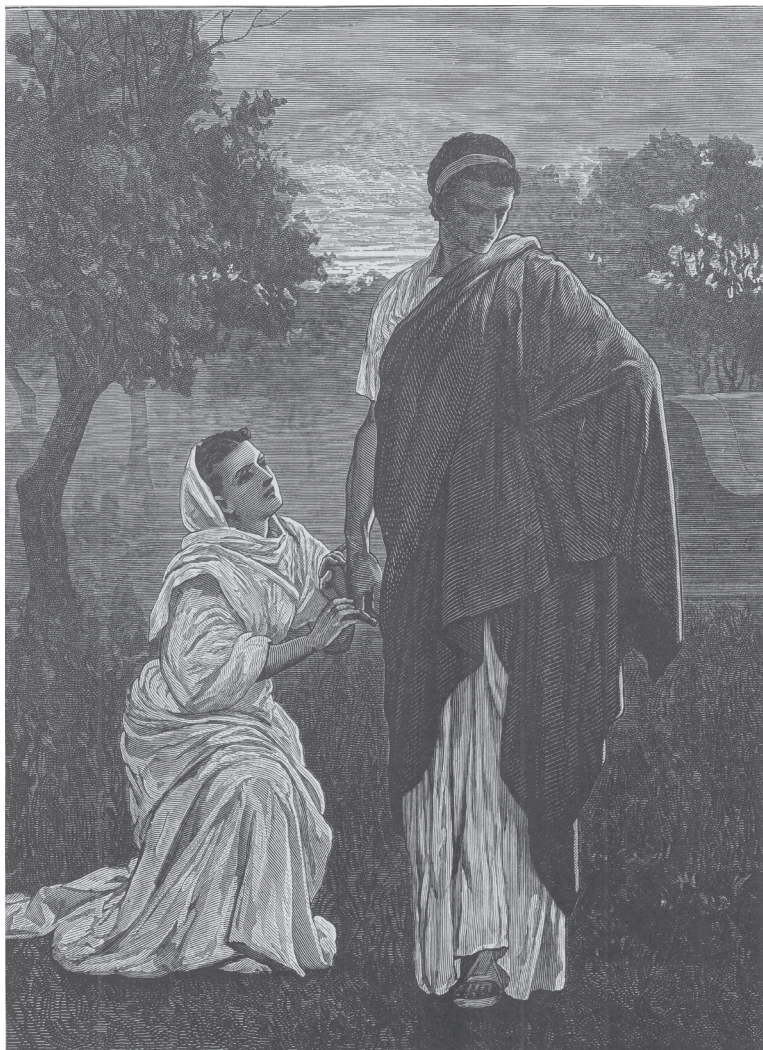
But Portia knew that something greater troubled her husband. She knelt at his feet and said, “No, my Brutus. You have some sickness within your mind. I beg you, by all your vows of love, that you **un**fold to me why you are so worried.”

unfold: reveal

Brutus helped his wife to her feet, saying, “Kneel not, gentle Portia. Wait a while and **by and by**, you shall know the secrets of my heart.”

by and by: soon; in a little while

The next morning, several of the conspirators set off for Caesar’s house to accompany him to the Senate House. Before they arrived, Caesar was approached by his wife, Calpurnia. During the night she had dreamed that Caesar’s statue poured forth blood like a fountain with many spouts. Now she pleaded with her husband to stay at home.



PORTIA PLEADS WITH HER HUSBAND, BRUTUS.

“I never believed in **omens**,” she said, “but now they frighten me. **Alas**, my lord, do not go forth today!”

omens: events or signs believed to be predictions of the future

alas: an expression of sadness, pity, or concern

But Caesar was determined to go. He turned to Calpurnia and said:

“Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The **valiant** never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.”

valiant: brave and bold

But Calpurnia insisted until, moved by his wife’s fear and sorrow, Caesar agreed. “For you,” he said, “I will stay at home.”

Soon, however, when the conspirators arrived, Caesar changed his mind. Decius told Caesar that the Senators planned to offer him a crown that day, and that they might mock him for staying home because of his wife’s bad dream. So Caesar dressed and walked out with the conspirators.

As they neared the Senate House, Caesar saw the soothsayer. “The ides of March are come,” Caesar said to him.

“Ay, Caesar,” said the soothsayer, “but not gone.”

The senators stood as Caesar took his seat. Then Metellus Cimber drew near and knelt before him, crying out, “Most high, most mighty, and most powerful Caesar.”

Caesar told him to rise, for he knew what Metellus was about to ask. Caesar had **banished** Metellus’s brother, Publius Cimber, from Rome. And now, kneeling at Caesar’s feet, Metellus began to ask that his brother be allowed to return.

banished: officially expelled from a country or place

But Caesar refused to let him speak. “Ordinary men,” said Caesar, might be moved by “sweet words and **base spaniel fawning**. But,” Caesar continued, frowning at Metellus Cimber, “if thou dost bend and **pray** and **fawn**, I **spurn** thee like a **cur** out of my way.” No flattery or puppy-like affection on Metellus Cimber’s part would make Caesar change his mind—on the contrary, such behavior was more likely to move Caesar to kick Metellus out of the way as he would a pesky dog.

base spaniel fawning: lowly and dog-like excessive affection

pray: plead, beg

fawn: seek favor through excessive flattery and affection

spurn: kick

cur: a mongrel dog

To Caesar's surprise, Brutus and Cassius came forth to support Metellus Cimber's request. But Caesar would not be moved.

"I am as **constant** as the **northern star**," he said. "I was constant Cimber should be banished, and constant do remain to keep him so." Other senators called upon Caesar to change his mind, but he refused them all.

constant:

unchanging; firm in one's belief or determination

northern star: the bright polestar, Polaris, that appears fixed in the sky

Then Casca quickly stepped behind Caesar, and saying, "Speak, hands, for me!" he struck Caesar in the back with his dagger.

Suddenly the conspirators were upon Caesar, stabbing him on all sides. Despite their attacks Caesar remained standing—until he saw Brutus raise his dagger to strike. As Brutus thrust in his dagger, Caesar spoke his last words: "**Et tu, Brutè?** Then fall, Caesar!" And covering his face with his cloak, Caesar fell and died.

Et tu, Brutè?: Latin, meaning "Even you, Brutus?"

News of Caesar's death spread quickly. The city was in an uproar. Brutus was anxious to restore order. So, when Caesar's friend Mark



SUDDENLY THE CONSPIRATORS WERE UPON CAESAR.

Antony came to the Senate House and seemed, despite his shock at the assassination, willing to cooperate, Brutus was relieved.

Antony shook the hands of all the conspirators and asked only that he be allowed to speak at Caesar's funeral. Cassius strongly objected to this request, but Brutus agreed on the condition that Brutus himself speak first. In this way, thought Brutus, he could give good reason for the conspirators' bloody act and make the people understand why the assassination of Caesar was necessary for the good of Rome.

But Mark Antony had other plans. He was determined to **avenge** his friend's murder. He sent word to Octavius, Caesar's great-nephew whom Caesar had adopted as his son and **heir**. Octavius was near Rome with his army. Antony sent a message telling Octavius to keep at a safe distance and be prepared to act.

avenge: to get back at someone on someone else's behalf; to punish someone for an injury or wrong

heir: a person who inherits property or a position from another person after that person's death

Forum: the center of activity in the city of ancient Rome, with government buildings, shops, and marketplaces

pulpit: a platform for public speaking

As angry crowds gathered in the **Forum**, Brutus walked up to the **pulpit** and addressed the people. "Romans and countrymen," he said, "hear me for my cause, and believe me for mine honor. If there be in this assembly any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus's love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was valiant, I honor him; but as he was

ambitious, I **slew** him. Who is here so **base** that would be a **bondman**? Who is here so **vile** that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended.”

slew (past tense of *slay*): killed

base: low

bondman: slave

vile: disgusting, worthless

“None, Brutus, none,” cried the people, who, though they had once cheered Caesar, were now persuaded that Caesar had threatened their freedom.

Now Mark Antony entered, with Caesar’s covered body. Brutus announced that Antony had permission to give a **eulogy**. Then Brutus departed, and the crowd cheered for him, with some even shouting that he should be the next Caesar.

eulogy: a speech in honor of a dead person

Then Antony entered the pulpit and spoke these words:

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, **lend me your ears**;

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft **interred** with their bones,
So let it be with Caesar....”

lend me your ears:
listen to me; give me your attention

interred: buried in the earth

As the crowd listened, they began to think more kindly of Caesar. Antony went on:

“He was my friend, faithful and just to me,
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.”

The crowd began to get uneasy. Antony kept calling Brutus “an honorable man”—yet how could this Brutus be so “honorable” if he had helped kill a leader who was so just and kind? Antony continued:

“You all did see that on the Lupercal
I **thrice** presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And sure he is an honorable man.”

thrice: three times

As Antony spoke, some people began to blame Brutus and the other conspirators for their actions. Soon Antony seemed overcome with emotion. He called for the people to stand around the body. Then he held up Caesar’s torn, bloodstained cloak for all to see. He showed them where Cassius’s



ANTONY REVEALS CAESAR'S BODY.

dagger had run it through, and then Casca's. When he showed them the rip made by Brutus's dagger, he said, "This was the most unkindest cut of all."

mutiny: resistance to or rebellion against an authority

Then he pulled aside the covering to reveal Caesar's body. This was more than the people could stand. Some called for **mutiny**; some were ready to burn the house of Brutus.

To win the people to his side once and for all, Antony began to read a paper that he said was Caesar's will. It called for every Roman citizen to be given seventy-five silver coins.

revenge: to get back at someone; to punish someone for an injury done to you

"Most noble Caesar!" the people cried. "We'll **revenge** his death." Then the angry citizens rushed forth to burn the conspirators' houses.

Cassius and Brutus were forced to flee from Rome. Separately, they assembled troops to prepare for a fight against the **allied** armies of Antony and Octavius.

allied: joined together

Later, Cassius and Brutus met near a city in Turkey called Sardis. Their meeting quickly turned into a heated argument. Cassius was furious that Brutus had accused him of taking bribes. Brutus was angry that when he had asked Cassius to send money to help pay the troops, Cassius had refused. It seemed that their argument might turn

to violence, but after many threats and insults, the men worked through their misunderstandings.

“I did not think,” said Cassius to Brutus, “you could have been so angry.”

“O Cassius,” sighed Brutus. “I am **sick of** many griefs. Portia is dead.”

sick of: worn out by

Heartbroken with worry over her husband’s absence, and fearful that the forces of Octavius and Antony would overwhelm Brutus, Portia had grown desperate and taken her own life.

“Portia,” said Cassius, stunned. “Art thou gone?”

“I have the patience to **endure** it now,” said Brutus. He then turned their talk away from his personal

endure: withstand;
put up with; continue
despite hardships

grief to the preparations for the upcoming battle.

Brutus and Cassius faced a decision: should they wait for Antony and Octavius to make the first move, or should they attack? Cassius preferred to wait, but Brutus felt that **the time was ripe** for battle, for the enemy was growing stronger every day. “There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken **at the flood**, leads on to **fortune**,” said Brutus—meaning that, like ships waiting

the time was ripe:
this was the right
moment

at the flood: at high
tide

fortune: luck;
success

for high tide to allow them to depart on an ocean voyage, he and Cassius must be prepared to act at the right moment.

Cassius agreed to Brutus's plan. The next morning they would set out to meet the enemy at **Philippi**, far away in northern Greece.

Philippi: pronounced
fih-LIP-eye

Brutus spent a troubled night. As he sat down and opened a book, a strange sight suddenly rose before him—it was the ghost of Caesar himself! “Thou shalt see me at Philippi,” warned the ghost, and then it disappeared.

Just before the armies clashed in battle on the plains of Philippi, Cassius said to Brutus, “If we do lose this battle, then is this the very last time we shall speak together.”

“This day,” Brutus replied, “must end that work the ides of March begun. And whether we shall meet again I know not. Therefore our everlasting farewell take. Forever and forever farewell, Cassius.”

“Forever and forever farewell, Brutus,” said Cassius.



BRUTUS SEES THE GHOST OF CAESAR.

At first, Brutus's soldiers fared well, but Cassius's men were driven back. Convinced that all was lost, Cassius took his own life in the old Roman way. He handed his sword to his servant and commanded the servant to stab him. As the blade pierced his body, Cassius gasped, "Caesar, thus thou art revenged, even with the sword that killed thee."

Accompanied by a few exhausted soldiers, Brutus came upon the body of Cassius. Brutus **uttered** a last sad farewell over his friend—"the last of all the Romans," he called him. "Friends," said Brutus to the tired soldiers with him, "I owe this dead man more tears than ever you shall see me pay. I shall find time, Cassius; I shall find time."

uttered: spoke

Brutus and the others returned to battle, but the armies of Antony and Octavius proved too strong for them. When Brutus knew at last that there was no hope of victory, he decided to end his life as Cassius had done, rather than be captured.

Brutus turned to his few remaining followers. One by one he drew them aside and asked them to hold his sword so that he could hurl himself on it.

The first two soldiers could not bring themselves to do it. The third, urged on by Brutus, turned his head aside and held the sword on which Brutus flung himself more gladly, he said, than he had lifted it against Caesar.

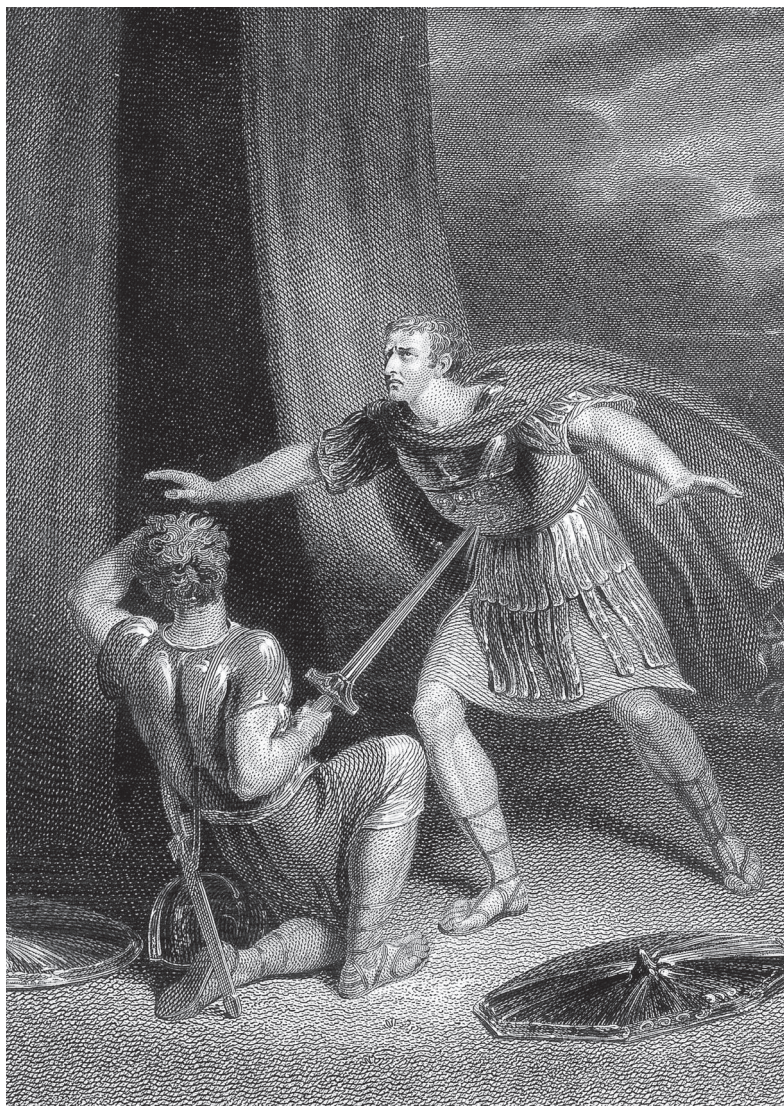
Soon Antony and Octavius arrived. When Antony saw Brutus lying dead, he was moved with admiration. “This was the noblest Roman of them all,” he said to Octavius. “All the conspirators **save** only he did what they did in **envy** of great Caesar.” Only Brutus, said Antony, believed he was acting for the good of all Romans. “His life was **gentle**,” concluded Antony, “and **the elements** so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’”

save: except

envy: jealousy; feelings of discontent over another person's success or advantages

gentle: noble

the elements: In ancient times, people thought there were four “elements”—earth, air, fire, and water—and each was associated with certain human characteristics and behaviors.



BRUTUS DIES ON HIS OWN SWORD.

William Shakespeare's

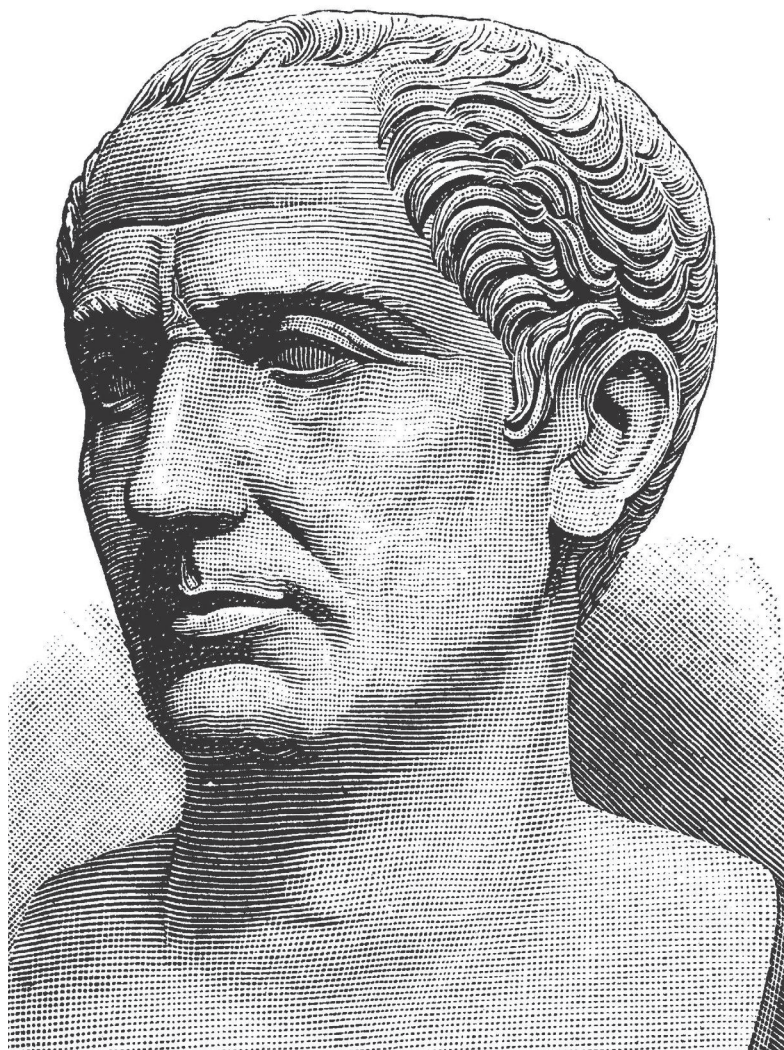
THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR

*An Abridged Version of the Play Adapted for
Readers' Theater or Classroom Performance*

This version of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* generally uses Shakespeare's original language, with a few words changed and a few lines moved. It has been shortened to make it practical for production in middle school and up. It can also be enjoyed as a readers' theater performance. Most of the stage directions [*the notes in brackets, like this*] are not Shakespeare's but have been specially written for this condensed version of the play.

To Shakespeare's cast of characters, this script adds six Citizens. They sometimes take part in the action, speaking lines written by Shakespeare for characters simply called "Plebeians" in the original play. Mostly, however, the Citizens in our version of the play help guide the audience. They summarize parts of the action that have been cut or condensed, and occasionally they clarify and comment on the action.

The script is printed on the left-hand pages, with some words underlined. On the right-hand pages you will find definitions of the underlined words, as well as occasional explanatory notes.



JULIUS CAESAR

A Note on Prose and Poetry in Shakespeare

As you read through the script of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, you will notice that Shakespeare wrote some lines as prose and some as poetry. What's the difference?

Lines in Prose

Prose is everyday language, the language we usually speak and write. In Shakespeare's plays, everyday characters usually speak in prose.

For example, at the beginning of *Julius Caesar* we meet the Cobbler, a shoe repairman. When asked about his work, the Cobbler speaks his answer in prose:

I am, indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes—
when they are in great danger, I recover them.

Lines in Poetry

Most of the characters in *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* speak in poetry. Many of these characters are people of high social position, such as Roman

senators or other government officials. The words they speak are broken into separate lines. Notice how each new line of poetry begins with a capital letter, like these lines spoken by Cassius to Brutus:

I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but for my single self—
I was born free as Caesar. So were you.
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.

Those lines are poetry, even though they don't rhyme. Also, look again at the first two lines. Notice that while there is a break between the lines, there is no comma or other punctuation mark—so, in speaking those lines, you would not pause between them, but just keep going, like this: "I cannot tell what you and other men think of this life"

Similarly, there is no punctuation mark between the last two lines, so in speaking them you would not pause at the line break (between "both" and "Endure"). Instead, you would keep going, like this: "...and we can both endure the winter's cold as well as he."

Blank Verse

Shakespeare usually writes a kind of poetry called “blank verse.” A standard line of blank verse has 10 syllables. Count the number of syllables in each of the lines in the passage quoted above—you’ll see that each line has 10 syllables.

Sometimes Shakespeare varies slightly from the 10-syllable pattern by dropping or adding a syllable or two. But in general, when Shakespeare’s characters speak in poetry, each line has 10 syllables.

Sometimes the 10-syllable line is shared by two speakers, as in this exchange between Casca and Cassius. The words in *italics* here make up a single line of blank verse—count the syllables:

CASCA

And I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest.

CASSIUS

There’s a bargain made.

The 10-syllable blank verse line flows straight through from Casca’s words to Cassius’s, giving a sense of urgency:

...As who goes farthest. / There's a
bargain made.

In the script you will occasionally see words marked in a way that indicates you should pronounce the marked syllable, even though you would not do so in everyday speech. For example, look at these lines spoken by Antony as he points to a rip made by a knife that stabbed through Caesar's gown.

Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed.
This was the most unkindest cut of all.

In the first line above, notice the word *beloved*. We speak that word as two syllables: *be-loved*. But in Shakespeare's line, the mark over the final "e" in the word (*belovèd*) tells you to say it as three syllables: *be-lov-ed*.

Let's read the line aloud, and as you read, count on your fingers the number of syllables:

Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed.
Because *belovèd* is spoken as three syllables, the line has the standard 10 syllables of blank verse.

Note that in the version of *Julius Caesar* presented in this book, you will come across some lines of poetry with fewer than 10 syllables. When that happens, it is usually because a few lines and words have been left out in this condensed version of the play.

Feeling the Rhythm

As you read the lines of blank verse aloud, you will feel a rhythm in them. Often, it's a regular beat, with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, like this:

da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM

Let's look again at those lines spoken by Antony. Notice the pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. Read aloud and emphasize the stressed syllables, which are underlined and in **bold** type.

Through this the well-belovèd **Brutus** stabbed.
This was the most unkindest cut of all.

Read the lines aloud once more, and this time, clap your hands on each stressed syllable. Do you feel the rhythm?

So, there's a regular pattern in the lines Shakespeare writes as poetry—each blank verse line has ten syllables, with a rhythm made by an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Shakespeare sometimes changes that regular pattern, in order to create a variety of emotions and rhythms in the speech of his characters. He builds on the regular pattern but is not locked down by it.

While you want to feel the rhythm in blank verse, you don't want to overdo it when you speak the lines in performance.

In speaking Shakespeare's poetry, be aware of the rhythm but don't artificially emphasize the stressed syllables—that would make the lines sound “sing-songy.” Instead, just feel the rhythm and speak the words naturally.

In speaking Shakespeare, whether prose or poetry, speak the lines naturally—that's the key.



CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Julius CAESAR, a powerful general and leader of Rome
CALPURNIA, his wife

Marcus BRUTUS, Roman senator who joins the conspiracy
to assassinate Caesar

PORTIA, his wife

LUCIUS, their young servant

The conspirators

Caius CASSIUS

CASCA

CINNA

DECIUS

METELLUS CIMBER

TREBONIUS

Mark ANTONY, a politician and friend of Caesar

OCTAVIUS Caesar, grand-nephew and adopted son of
Julius Caesar

LEPIDUS, a senator who briefly rules with Antony and
Octavius after Caesar's death

FLAVIUS, a Roman official

MARULLUS, a Roman official

PUBLIUS, an old Roman senator

POPILIUS Lena, a Roman senator

COBBLER, a witty shoe repairman

SOOTHSAYER, a mysterious fortune-teller

CINNA, a poet (not the same as Cinna the conspirator)

PINDARUS, servant to Cassius

SERVANT to Mark Antony

Soldiers in the armies of Cassius and Brutus

TITINIUS

CLITUS

VOLUMNIUS

STRATO

CITIZENS of Rome, including six with speaking parts

ACT 1

SCENE 1: ROME. A STREET.

[A crowd enters, chanting "Caesar! Caesar! Caesar!" They continue chanting until CITIZEN 1 steps forward and raises a hand—the crowd freezes** and goes silent. CITIZEN 1 speaks directly to the audience, as do the other CITIZENS that follow]*

CITIZEN 1 *[stepping forward]*

Welcome, citizens of modern times!

CITIZEN 2 *[stepping forward]*

We are citizens of Rome—*ancient* Rome to you.

CITIZEN 3 *[stepping forward]*

More than two-thousand years before your time.

CITIZEN 4 *[stepping forward]*

And we are here to help tell the story in our play.

CITIZEN 5 *[stepping forward]*

Well, it's not entirely our play.

CITIZEN 6 *[stepping forward]*

True! This is our version of William Shakespeare's tragedy of...

* This crowd can include as many people as the production allows, but needs to include at least the six Citizens who will speak to the audience.

** In a play, to *freeze* is to suddenly become motionless.

ALL SIX CITIZENS

Julius Caesar!

CROWD *[chanting enthusiastically]*

Caesar! Caesar! Caesar!

[CITIZENS 4, 5, and 6 hush the crowd.]

CITIZEN 1

The Rome we live in is a republic, wealthy and powerful.

CITIZEN 2

But our republic has been torn apart by civil war.

CITIZEN 3

One side was led by Pompey, the other side by...

CROWD

Caesar! Caesar! Caesar!

CITIZEN 4

As our play begins, Pompey has been killed. Caesar has defeated Pompey's sons, and has returned in triumph to Rome.

CITIZEN 5

Which is why we're parading through the streets, celebrating Caesar's victory.

Pompey: pronounced *POM-pee*

CITIZEN 6

And, since it's mid-February, we're also celebrating a religious festival called the Lupercal, in honor of the god of fertility.

CITIZEN 1

Really, it's kind of a big rowdy party.

[A short burst of happy cheering from the crowd—"whoopie, hooray, woo-hoo," etc. Enter two government officials, FLAVIUS and MARULLUS, frowning.]

CITIZEN 2

But not everyone loves a party.

CITIZEN 3

And not everyone is happy that Caesar defeated Pompey.

[All CITIZENS merge back into the crowd, which again chants enthusiastically:]

CROWD

Caesar! Caesar! Caesar!

FLAVIUS *[very annoyed, hushing the crowd]*

Hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home!
Is this a holiday?

Lupercal: pronounced *LOO-puhr-kul*

hence: go away

idle: not working; lazy

MARULLUS [*pointing to the COBBLER, at the front of the crowd*]

You, sir, what trade are you?

Answer me directly.

COBBLER [*stepping forth, and thinking himself a very witty fellow*]

A trade, sir, that I hope I may use with a safe conscience, which is, indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

MARULLUS

What meanest thou by that? Mend me, thou saucy fellow?*

COBBLER

Truly, sir, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.

[The COBBLER removes a shoe and pretends to sew it. The crowd laughs.]

FLAVIUS

Thou art a cobbler, art thou?

COBBLER

I am, indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes—when they are in great danger, I recover them.

[The crowd laughs. FLAVIUS gives them a cold look. They quickly fall silent.]

cobbler: a person who repairs shoes

trade: a job requiring certain skills

saucy: sassy; disrespectful

* Marullus thinks the cobbler has insulted him, because he hears the cobbler's reference to "bad soles" as "bad souls."

FLAVIUS

But wherefore art not in thy shop today?
Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

COBBLER

Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work. But, indeed, sir, we make holiday to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph.

MARULLUS [*outraged*]

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?*

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you sat with patient expectation
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!

*The crowd exits, grumbling.***

FLAVIUS [*to MARULLUS*]

Go you down that way towards the Capitol.
I'll drive away the vulgar from the streets.
So do you too, where you perceive them thick.
This Caesar would soar above the view of men
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

[They exit in different directions.]

wherefore: for what reason

* Marullus objects to any celebration because Caesar has not conquered a foreign enemy but triumphed in a civil war of Romans against Romans.

oft: often

strew: scatter

** When CITIZENS 1-6 exit, they take positions near the stage in locations that allow them to be seen and heard by the audience. From here, throughout the remainder of the play, they will sometimes comment on the action but not take part in it. At other times, as specified in the stage directions, the citizens will enter and take part in the action.

Capitol: the national temple of Rome

vulgar: common people

thick: crowded together

soar: fly high

servile: fearfully obedient; submissive

SCENE 2: A PUBLIC SQUARE.

[Enter CITIZENS 1-6. After they speak, they stay in the scene as members of the crowd watching the festivities.]

CITIZEN 1

Now, as the festival of the Lupercal continues, Julius Caesar enters the scene.

[A fanfare. Enter CAESAR.]

CITIZEN 2

With him come some of Rome's leading citizens and politicians.

[Enter BRUTUS and CASSIUS.]

CITIZEN 3

There is Brutus, a friend of Caesar.

CITIZEN 4

And Cassius, Brutus's brother-in-law, and his friend.

[Enter CASCA.]

CITIZEN 5

And Casca, known for his blunt way of talking.

[Enter ANTONY, dressed for a race.]

CITIZEN 6

And Mark Antony, Caesar's trusted friend and supporter.

fanfare: a brief piece of music to introduce an important person or event

CITIZEN 1

Mark Antony—who's usually just called Antony—is getting ready to run in the race that is part of the Lupercal festivities.

[ANTONY stretches for the race.]

CITIZEN 2

As part of this festival of fertility, it's believed that a woman who wishes to have a child will have good luck if she is touched by a runner in the race.

[Enter CALPURNIA.]

CITIZEN 3

That is what Caesar wishes for his wife...

CAESAR *[Calling out to his wife—he is clearly used to giving orders and being immediately obeyed.]*
Calpurnia.

CASCA *[bossily hushing everyone]*
Peace! Caesar speaks.

CAESAR
Calpurnia!

CALPURNIA *[approaching CAESAR]*
Here, my lord.

CAESAR

Stand you directly in Antonius's* way
When he doth run his course. Antonius!

ANTONY *[approaching CAESAR]*

Caesar, my lord?

CAESAR

Forget not in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia.

ANTONY

I shall remember.

When Caesar says "Do this," it is performed.

*[A SOOTHSAYER steps forward from the crowd. Apart from the main action, three CITIZENS speak in stage whispers.**]*

CITIZEN 4

Who is that strange fellow stepping forward?

CITIZEN 5

That's the soothsayer.

CITIZEN 6

They say he can see into the future!

SOOTHSAYER *[pointing at CAESAR]*

Caesar!

* *Antonius* is another form of the name *Antony*.

run his course: run the race

** Stage whispers are loud whispers that the audience can hear but that the characters onstage are understood not to hear.

CAESAR *[startled]*

Ha! Who calls?

CASCA *[again hushing everyone]*

Peace, yet again!

SOOTHSAYER *[delivering an ominous warning]*

Beware the ides of March.

CAESAR

What man is that?

BRUTUS

A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

CAESAR

Set him before me. Let me see his face.

CASSIUS *[pulling the SOOTHSAYER forward]*

Fellow, come from the throng. Look upon Caesar.

CAESAR

What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

SOOTHSAYER *[mysteriously]*

Beware the ides of March.

[A brief, tense pause—what will CAESAR do?]

CAESAR *[coolly dismissing the SOOTHSAYER]*

He is a dreamer. Let us leave him.

ominous: full of the feeling that something bad is going to happen

ides: in the ancient Roman calendar, a day in the middle of the month

bids: requests

throng: packed crowd of people

[CASCA pushes the SOOTHSAYER, who exits in one direction, while CAESAR and the rest exit in a different direction—all except BRUTUS and CASSIUS, who remain. BRUTUS looks at CAESAR as he exits; CASSIUS looks at BRUTUS.]

CITIZEN 1 *[addressing the audience]*

Would you listen to a warning from a fortune-teller?

CITIZEN 2

Caesar has chosen to ignore the soothsayer's warning to "beware the ides of March"—

CITIZEN 3

Meaning the middle of the month—the 15th day of March...

CITIZEN 4

Which is still about a month away.

CITIZEN 5

But for now, Caesar and the others have gone to watch the race.

CITIZEN 6

Only Cassius and Brutus remain behind. Each man has a troubled mind—but for different reasons.

CASSIUS

Will you go see the race?

BRUTUS

Not I.

CASSIUS

I pray you, do.

BRUTUS

I am not gamesome. I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.

CASSIUS

Brutus, I do observe you now of late.
You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand.*

BRUTUS

Vexed I am.
But let not therefore my good friends be grieved—
Among which number, Cassius, be you one—
That poor Brutus is with himself at war.**

CASSIUS

Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

BRUTUS

No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself
But by reflection, by some other things.***

CASSIUS

'Tis true.
And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn

I pray you: I ask you; I urge you

am not gamesome: do not enjoy sports and games

* Cassius means that Brutus has lately seemed harsh and unfriendly.

vexed: worried, irritated, frustrated

** Brutus means that his friends—including Cassius—should not be worried by the fact that Brutus is himself worried and arguing with himself about some troubling issue.

*** Brutus means that you cannot see your own eye unless it is reflected in something (such as a mirror).

lamented: regretted

Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your image.*

BRUTUS

Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,
That you would have me seek into myself
For that which is not in me?

CASSIUS

Since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.

[Cheers and shouting offstage; BRUTUS is alarmed.]

BRUTUS

What means this shouting? I do fear the people
Choose Caesar for their king.

CASSIUS *[eagerly seizing the chance to influence BRUTUS]*

Ay, do you fear it?

Then must I think you would not have it so.

BRUTUS

I would not, Cassius, yet I love him well.
But what is it that you would impart to me?

CASSIUS

Well, *honor* is the subject of my story.

* In an attempt to flatter Brutus, Cassius says that it's too bad that Brutus does not have a mirror in which he might see his "hidden worthiness."

glass: mirror

modestly: without exaggeration

discover: make known; show

ay (pronounced "eye"): yes (as used here, an expression of emphasis, like saying *indeed* or *really*)

him: Caesar

impart: make known; communicate

BRUTUS

Then let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honor more than I fear death.*

CASSIUS

I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but for my single self—
[suddenly speaking excitedly]
I was born free as Caesar. So were you.
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.
And this man is now become a god,
And wretched Cassius must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.**

[More shouting and cheering offstage.]

BRUTUS *[worried]*

Another general shout!
I do believe that these applauses are
For some new honors that are heaped on Caesar.

CASSIUS *[bitterly]*

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates.
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,**
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

speed me: favor me; give me good fortune

* Brutus says that he wishes for the gods to favor him as long as he values honor above all, even above his own life.

virtue: a good and admirable quality in a person (such as Brutus's "honor," to which Cassius here refers)

endure: withstand; put up with; continue despite hardships

wretched: miserable

** Cassius claims that he must bow down low if Caesar merely nods his head at him.

general shout: a shout from the crowd, from the people in general

applauses: expressions of approval, such as clapping and cheering

bestride: stand over; straddle

Colossus: a gigantic statue, such as the famous one that stood on the island of Rhodes in ancient Greece

petty: unimportant

*** Since ancient times, some people have believed that the stars influence our lives and shape our fate.

underlings: people of low status who are commanded by others

"Brutus" and "Caesar"—what should be in that
"Caesar"?

Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name.
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well.*
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed
That he is grown so great?

BRUTUS [*holding up his hand to stop CASSIUS from going on*]

What you would work me to, I have some aim.
I entreat you, for this present, I would not
Be any further moved. What you have said,
I will consider; what you have to say,
I will with patience hear.
Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this:
Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us.**

CASSIUS

I am glad that my weak words
Have struck but thus much show of fire from Brutus.

BRUTUS [*looking offstage*]

The games are done and Caesar is returning.

[*Enter CAESAR, looking angry, followed by CASCA,
CALPURNIA, and ANTONY.*]

* Cassius means that the names "Brutus" and "Caesar" sound equally good when spoken.

have some aim: can figure out

entreat: ask, plead, beg

for this present: for now, for the moment

chew upon: think carefully about

villager: poor rural person

repute himself: call himself

** Brutus is showing his pride in being a citizen of the Roman republic by saying that he would rather live as a poor man in the country than live in Rome if Caesar ends the republic and makes himself king.

But look you, Cassius.
The angry spot doth glow on Caesar's brow.
Calpurnia's cheek is pale.

CASSIUS

Casca will tell us what the matter is.

CAESAR

Antonius!

ANTONY *[coming forward]*

Caesar?

CAESAR

Let me have men about me that are fat.
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look.
He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous.

ANTONY

Fear him not, Caesar. He's not dangerous.
He is a noble Roman.

CAESAR

Would he were fatter! But I fear him not.
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much.
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort

yond: yonder; over there at a distance

lean: thin

Would he: I wish that he

if my name were liable to fear: if Caesar could be affected by fear

spare: thin

As if he mocked himself to smile at all.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
While they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
Come, tell me truly what thou think'st of him.

*[CAESAR exits with ANTONY, followed by CALPURNIA.
CASCA starts to exit but remains when CASSIUS pulls
his sleeve.]*

CASCA *[somewhat annoyed]*

You pulled me by the cloak. Would you speak
with me?

BRUTUS

Ay, Casca. Tell us what hath chanced today,
That Caesar looks so sad.

CASCA *[with a mix of scorn and boredom]*

Why, there was a crown offered him; and, being
offered him, he put it by with the back of his hand,
thus *[he gestures with his hand]*, and then the people
fell a-shouting.

BRUTUS

What was the second noise for?

CASCA

Why, for that too.

CASSIUS

They shouted thrice. What was the last cry for?

at heart's ease: calm, comfortable

hath chanced: has happened
sad: serious

put it by: pushed it away
thus: like this

thrice: three times

CASCA

Why, for that too.

BRUTUS *[alarmed]*

Was the crown offered him thrice?

CASCA

Ay, and he put it by thrice, and at every putting-by,
mine honest neighbors shouted.

CASSIUS

Who offered him the crown?

CASCA

Why, Antony. It was mere foolery. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown. And, as I told you, he put it by; but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. And still as he refused it, the rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands and uttered such a deal of stinking breath that it almost choked Caesar, for he swooned and fell down.

CASSIUS

What, did Caesar swoon?

CASCA

He fell down in the marketplace, and foamed at mouth, and was speechless.

BRUTUS

'Tis very like; he hath the failing sickness.*

at every putting-by: every time he pushed it away
mine: my

foolery: foolish behavior

to my thinking: as it seemed to me

would fain have had it: would willingly have taken
 it [the crown]

rabblement: rowdy crowd

uttered: gave forth sounds (such as cries or sighs)

swooned: fainted

like: likely; probable

* Accounts from the time said that Caesar suffered from epilepsy, a medical condition that affects the nervous system and can cause sudden seizures and blackouts.

CASCA

I am sure Caesar fell down. And still the tag-rag people did clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they do the players in the theatre.

BRUTUS

And after that, he came thus sad away?

CASCA

Ay.

CASSIUS

Did Cicero* say anything?

CASCA

Ay, he spoke Greek.**

CASSIUS

To what effect?

CASCA

Nay, those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads. But for mine own part, it was Greek to me. Fare you well.

[He starts to leave.]

CASSIUS

Will you dine with me tomorrow?

tag-rag people: the rough crowd, dressed (as Casca describes them) in torn and ragged clothing

thus sad: looking so stern and serious

* Cicero was a Roman senator famed for his eloquence (his ability to speak well and persuasively).

** Only educated Romans would have understood Greek, so by speaking in Greek, Cicero left out many in the crowd.

To what effect?: What was his point?

nay: no

CASCA

Ay, if I be alive and your dinner worth the eating.

CASSIUS

Good. I will expect you.

CASCA

Do so. Farewell, both.

[He exits.]

BRUTUS

What a blunt fellow is this grown to be!
He was quick mettle when he went to school.

CASSIUS

So is he now in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise.

BRUTUS

Cassius, for this time I will leave you.
Tomorrow, if you please to speak with me,
Come home to me, and I will wait for you.

CASSIUS

I will do so. Till then, think of the world.

[BRUTUS exits. CASSIUS thinks aloud.]

Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.
Well, Brutus, thou art noble. Yet, I see

blunt: dull-witted

was quick mettle: had a lively spirit

execution: carrying out a plan of action

enterprise: mission; challenging activity

home to me: to my home

think of the world: think about all that is going on around
us now

bear me hard: resent me; strongly dislike me

Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
From that it is disposed.*
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
[He has an idea.]
I will this night,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,
As if they came from several citizens,
Writings all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his name, wherein obscurely
Caesar's ambition shall be glanced at.
And after this let Caesar seat him sure,
For we will shake him, or worse days endure.

[He exits.]

CITIZEN 1

So, Cassius has come up with a plan to sway Brutus.

CITIZEN 2

Cassius will write letters to Brutus that seem to come from many people.

CITIZEN 3

These letters will flatter Brutus, telling him how the Romans think highly of him.

CITIZEN 4

And they will also feed Brutus's fear that Caesar's growing ambition threatens the Roman republic.

mettle: character; personality; spirit

wrought: shaped, formed

* Cassius puns on *mettle* (meaning “character”) and *metal*. Just as metal can be hammered into different shapes, so (says Cassius) can Brutus’s character be bent from its usual tendencies.

seduced: led astray; persuaded to do something they normally wouldn’t

several hands: different kinds of handwriting

his: Brutus’s

obscurely: in an indirect way

ambition: an eager desire for power, success, status, or some other goal

glancèd at: mentioned in passing [*glancèd* is pronounced as two syllables, *glance-ed*]

seat him sure: sit securely (in other words, be prepared and hold on tight)

CITIZEN 5

Cassius knows that Brutus is a trusted friend of Caesar. And Cassius wants Brutus on his side, because Cassius has a bigger plan—and a dangerous one.

CITIZEN 6

Imagine now that a few weeks have passed. It is the night before the ides of March—and on this night, a wild storm is raging through Rome.

SCENE 3. A STREET.

[Thunder and lightning. Enter CASSIUS, and then from the opposite side, CASCA.]

CASSIUS *[on alert]*

Who's there?

CASCA *[suspiciously]*

A Roman.

CASSIUS

Casca, by your voice.

CASCA

Your ear is good. Cassius, what a night is this!

By the Capitol I met a lion

Who went by without annoying me.

And yesterday the bird of night did sit

Even at noonday upon the marketplace,

annoying: bothering; harming

bird of night: screech owl

Hooting and shrieking. And some swore they saw
Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.

O, I believe they are portentous things.

[thunder and lightning]

I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,
To be exalted with the threatening clouds.
But never till tonight, never till now
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.

[thunder and lightning]

CASSIUS

For my part, I have walked about the streets,
Submitting me unto the perilous night,
And when the cross blue lightning seemed to open
The breast of heaven, I did present myself
Even in the aim and very flash of it.

CASCA

But wherefore did you so much tempt the heavens?
It is the part of men to fear and tremble
When the most mighty gods by tokens send
Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.

CASSIUS

You are dull, Casca. You look pale and gaze
And put on fear and cast yourself in wonder,
To see the strange impatience of the heavens.
But if you would consider the true cause—

portentous: full of significance, possibly of a threatening kind

tempests: violent storms

scolding: angrily disapproving

rived: torn apart

ambitious: filled with an eager desire for power, success, status, or some other goal

exalted with: raised as high as

perilous: full of dangers

cross: crisscross; zigzag

tokens: signs, symbols

heralds: messengers

dull: dull-witted, stupid

gaze: stare blankly

put on: show openly

cast yourself in wonder: look astonished

[hinting at some dark secret]

Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night,
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
As doth the lion in the Capitol;*
A man no mightier than thyself or me
In personal action, yet prodigious grown
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.**

CASCA

'Tis Caesar that you mean, is it not, Cassius?

CASSIUS

Let it be who it is.

CASCA

Indeed, they say the Senators tomorrow
Mean to establish Caesar as a king.

CASSIUS

I know that Caesar would not be a wolf
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep.***
Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
Begin it with weak straws. What trash is Rome,
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves
For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Caesar!****

[He suddenly draws his dagger and points it at CASCA.]

lightens: flashes lightning

* This lion is possibly the one that Casca mentioned earlier when he said, “By the Capitol I met a lion.”

prodigious: abnormally huge; monstrous

fearful: frightening

eruptions: violent natural events

** Cassius is saying that while this man has no greater abilities than himself or Casca, he has grown huge and frightening, like the violent events on this stormy night.

*** Cassius thinks that Caesar can act like a wolf—a strong and fierce animal—only because the Roman people act like sheep, like meek creatures that are easily led.

offal: waste material

base: worthless

vile: disgusting, worthless

**** Cassius says that people who want to light a fire quickly start with “weak straws,” which burn easily. He then suggests that Rome—that is, the Roman people—are little better than waste materials (“base matter”) used to light a fire that casts a bright light on Caesar.

Perhaps I speak this to a willing servant.
But I am armed,
And dangers are to me indifferent.

CASCA

You speak to Casca, and to such a man
That is no fleeing tell-tale. Here, my hand.
[He extends his hand to CASSIUS.]
And I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest.*

CASSIUS *[clasping CASCA's hand]*

There's a bargain made.
Now know you, Casca, I have moved already
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans
To undergo with me an enterprise
Of honorable dangerous consequence.**
And I do know they wait for me tonight—
A night much like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.

[Enter CINNA.]

CASCA *[alarmed]*

Stand close awhile, for here comes one in haste.

CASSIUS

'Tis Cinna. He is a friend.
[He sheathes his dagger.]

indifferent: unimportant

fleering: sneering; laughing meanly

tell-tale: tattletale

* Casca means that he will equal or exceed the efforts of anyone (in whatever action Cassius proposes).

moved: persuaded

** Cassius claims that the mission ("enterprise") is both noble ("honorable") and very risky ("dangerous").

close: hidden, concealed

sheathes: puts [his dagger] back in its case

CINNA *[straining to see who is with CASSIUS]*

Who's that? Metellus Cimber?

CASSIUS

No, it is Casca, one incorporate
To our attempts.

CINNA

I am glad on 't. O Cassius, if you could
But win the noble Brutus to our party—

CASSIUS *[giving CINNA letters]*

Be you content. Good Cinna, take this paper,
And look you lay it where Brutus may find it.
And throw this in at his window.

CINNA

Well, I will hie,
And so bestow these papers as you bade me.

[CINNA exits.]

CASSIUS

Come, Casca. You and I will yet ere day
See Brutus at his house.

CASCA

O, he sits high in all the people's hearts,
And that which would appear offence in us,
His countenance, like richest alchemy,
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.*

incorporate to our attempts: tightly bound up in our plans

glad on 't: happy for it

win: win over; convince to join

our party: our side, our group

Be you content: don't worry

hie: hurry

bestow: put in place

bade: ordered, directed

ere: before

appear offence: seem wrong; look like a crime

countenance: approval (can also mean "appearance")

alchemy: an ancient practice, between science and magic, that aimed to transform common metals into gold

* Casca says that the support of Brutus will transform their wrong action into a good deed, at least in the eyes of the people, who admire Brutus.

CASSIUS

Him and his worth and our great need of him
You have right well understood. Let us go,
For it is after midnight, and ere day
We will awake him and be sure of him.

[They exit.]

ACT 2

CITIZEN 1

So, Cassius and Casca are off to see Brutus.

CITIZEN 2

They want him to join their conspiracy—their plot to assassinate Julius Caesar.

CITIZEN 3

They know that Brutus is respected by the people, so if he takes part in the terrible deed...

CITIZEN 4

Then perhaps it will seem less like a crime and more like a necessary act for the good of Rome.

CITIZEN 5

At least, that is what the conspirators would like to think.

CITIZEN 6

So, what is Brutus himself thinking on this wild and stormy night? He cannot sleep, and calls to his young servant.

SCENE I. ROME. BRUTUS'S GARDEN.

[Enter BRUTUS, pacing anxiously.]

conspiracy: the act of secretly plotting together, usually to do something wrong

BRUTUS

Lucius!

I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.*

Awake, I say! What, Lucius!

[Enter LUCIUS, yawning.]

LUCIUS *[sleepily]*

Called you, my lord?

BRUTUS

Get me a taper in my study, Lucius.

When it is lighted, come and call me here.

LUCIUS

I will, my lord.

*[LUCIUS exits. BRUTUS paces again, deep in thought, and then stops.**]*

BRUTUS

It must be by his death. He would be crowned—

How that might change his nature, there's the question.

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder.

Crown him—and then we put a sting in him,

That at his will he may do danger with.***

And therefore think him as a serpent's egg

Which, hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous—

And kill him in the shell.****

[Enter LUCIUS, carrying a letter.]

* Brutus, who cannot sleep, wishes he had the same weakness ("fault") as his servant Lucius, who can sleep through anything.

taper: candle

** As this scene opens, Brutus is "with himself at war" (as he previously described himself). He has been arguing with himself about whether to take action against Caesar. Now, as he speaks, he seems to have reached a decision, though he still has to convince himself that it is the right decision.

his: Caesar's

adder: poisonous snake

*** Brutus suggests that to crown Caesar king would be like giving a poisonous snake the chance to bite and do harm.

serpent's: snake's

as his kind: like other snakes

mischievous: dangerous, harmful

**** Brutus reasons that Caesar, who is ambitious to be king, should be thought of as a snake's egg. When the egg hatches, the snake will (like others of its kind) be dangerous. So, Brutus says, it should be killed while still in the shell.

LUCIUS

The taper burneth in your study, sir.
Searching the window for a flint, I found
This paper, thus sealed up, and I am sure
It did not lie there when I went to bed.

[He gives him the letter.]

BRUTUS

Get you to bed again. It is not day.

[LUCIUS exits. BRUTUS opens the letter and reads.]

"Brutus, thou sleep'st. Awake, and see thyself!
Speak, strike, redress!"
Am I entreated to speak and strike?

*[Knocking within.]**

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
And the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.**

[Enter LUCIUS.]

flint: a hard stone used for striking sparks to start a fire

redress: set right something that is wrong

entreated: earnestly asked

* This stage direction means that the sound of knocking on a door comes from offstage.

whet: to sharpen by rubbing on a stone (for example, to whet a knife); to stimulate or excite

motion: proposal (to do something)

interim: the time between

phantasma: illusion; figment of the imagination

hideous: horrible, frightful

insurrection: rebellion; an uprising against an established government

** Brutus says that the time between when a terrible action is proposed and actually carried out is like a frightening dream, during which a man feels like his mind and soul are rebelling against him.

LUCIUS

Sir, 'tis your brother* Cassius at the door.

BRUTUS

Is he alone?

LUCIUS

No, sir, there are more with him.
Their hats are plucked about their ears,
And half their faces buried in their cloaks.

BRUTUS

Let 'em enter.

[LUCIUS exits.]

O conspiracy,
Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,
When evils are most free? O, then by day
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
To mask thy monstrous visage?**

*[Enter the conspirators: CASSIUS, CASCA, DECIUS,
CINNA, METELLUS CIMBER, and TREBONIUS. All but
CASSIUS have their faces hidden, such as by hoods or
hats pulled low.]*

CASSIUS

Good morrow, Brutus. Do we trouble you?

* Cassius, who married Brutus's sister, is Brutus's brother-in-law.

plucked about: pulled down over

Shamest thou: Are you ashamed
brow: face

visage: face

** Brutus, who has been told that his visitors have masked their faces, thinks that if they are ashamed to show their faces at night, when evils run freely, then in the daytime where will they find a cave dark enough to hide their monstrous faces?

Good morrow: Good morning (as a greeting)

BRUTUS

I have been up this hour, awake all night.
Know I these men that come along with you?

CASSIUS

Yes, every man of them, and no man here
But honors you.* This is Trebonius.

[As each conspirator is introduced, he reveals his face.]

BRUTUS

He is welcome hither.

CASSIUS

This, Decius.

BRUTUS

He is welcome too.

CASSIUS

This, Casca; this, Cinna; and this, Metellus Cimber.

BRUTUS

They are all welcome.

CASSIUS *[motioning BRUTUS aside]*

Shall I entreat a word?

[BRUTUS and CASSIUS step aside and whisper.]

DECIUS *[pointing offstage]*

Here lies the east. Doth not the day break here?

* In saying "no man here but honors you," Cassius means that every man there respects and admires Brutus.

hither: to this place

CASCA

No.

CINNA

O, pardon, sir, it doth.

CASCA

You shall confess that you are both deceived.

[He points his sword in a different direction than DECIUS pointed.]

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises.

BRUTUS *[coming back to the group, with CASSIUS]*

Give me your hands, all of you, one by one.

CASSIUS

And let us swear our resolution.*

BRUTUS *[speaking as he shakes hands with each conspirator]*

No, not an oath.

What need we any spur but our own cause,

And honesty to honesty engaged?

Do not stain the virtue of our enterprise,

To think that this our cause does need an oath,

When every drop of blood that every

Roman bears, and nobly bears, is guilty

If he do break the smallest particle

Of any promise.**

* Cassius wants each conspirator to make a solemn pledge (to “swear”) that he will carry out the action that all have agreed to do.

oath: a declaration to keep one’s promise (usually accompanied by an appeal to a deity or high principle)

spur: a motivation to action

** Brutus argues that the act of taking an oath would spoil the purity of their cause; instead, he says, it is enough to trust to each man’s honor as a Roman, since all Romans know (says Brutus) that it is wrong to break a promise in even in smallest degree.

DECIUS

Shall no man else be touched but only Caesar?*

CASSIUS

Decius, well urged. I think it is not meet
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar,
Should outlive Caesar.
Let Antony and Caesar fall together.

BRUTUS

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
For Antony is but a limb of Caesar.
Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully.
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.**
And for Mark Antony, think not of him,
For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
When Caesar's head is off.

CASSIUS

Yet I fear him,
For in the engrafted love he bears to Caesar—

* Decius is asking, in a roundabout way, if the conspirators should kill anyone else besides Caesar. The innocent-sounding word, *touched*, hides the violence of their actions.

meet: fitting, suitable, appropriate

alas: an expression of sadness, pity, or concern

wrathfully: in a fiercely angry way

hew: chop, hack

carcass: the dead body of an animal

** Brutus wants to see the assassination of Caesar not as a bloody murder done in anger but as a kind of religious ceremony, a sacrifice to the gods, such as the Romans practiced in his time.

him: that is, Mark Antony

engrafted: deeply rooted; firmly interconnected

BRUTUS

Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him,
For he is given to sports, to wildness,
And much company.

TREBONIUS

There is no threat in him. Let him not die,
For he will live and laugh at this hereafter.

[A clock strikes.]

BRUTUS

Peace, count the clock.

CASSIUS

The clock hath struck three.

TREBONIUS

'Tis time to part.

CASSIUS *[worried]*

But it is doubtful yet
Whether Caesar will come forth today or no,
For he is superstitious grown of late.
The unaccustomed terror of this night
May hold him from the Capitol today.

DECIUS *[confidently]*

Never fear that. Let me work,
And I will bring him to the Capitol.

count the clock: count how many times the clock strikes

doubtful: uncertain

unaccustomed: unusual

CASSIUS

Nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him.
The morning comes upon us. We'll leave you, Brutus.

BRUTUS

Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily.
Let not our looks put on our purposes.*

CASSIUS

And, friends, disperse yourselves, but all remember
What you have said, and show yourselves true
Romans.

BRUTUS

And so good morrow to you every one.

[They exit—all but BRUTUS, who is deep in thought.]

CITIZEN 1

So Brutus has joined the conspiracy to assassinate
Julius Caesar.

CITIZEN 2

But Brutus said no to killing Mark Antony.

CITIZEN 3

Brutus doesn't see the threat that Cassius sees in
Antony.

CITIZEN 4

Now, in the darkness before dawn, someone else is
coming to see Brutus.

* Brutus is urging the men to appear bright and happy, and not to let their faces reveal their dark plans.

disperse yourselves: split up; go your separate ways

CITIZEN 5

It's his wife, Portia.

CITIZEN 6

And like her husband, Portia is full of troubled thoughts.

[Enter PORTIA.]

PORTIA *[anxiously]*

Brutus, my lord!

BRUTUS *[surprised]*

Portia, what mean you? Wherefore rise you now?

PORTIA

Brutus, yesternight, at supper,
You suddenly arose, and walked about,
Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
And when I asked you what the matter was,
You stared upon me with ungentle looks,
And with an angry wafture of your hand
Gave sign for me to leave you. Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

BRUTUS

I am not well in health, and that is all.

PORTIA

Brutus is wise and, were he not in health,
He would embrace the means to come by it.

Portia: pronounced *POR-shuh*

Wherefore rise you now?: Why are you awake (at this early hour)?

yesternight: last night

musings: thinking deeply

arms across: arms folded across the chest

ungentle: harsh; unkind

wafture: wave

BRUTUS

Why, so I do. Good Portia, go to bed.

PORTIA

No, my Brutus.

You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
I ought to know of. *[She kneels.]* And upon my knees
By all your vows of love,
I entreat you, that you unfold to me
Why you are heavy, and what men tonight
Have had resort to you; for here have been
Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
Even from darkness.

BRUTUS *[taking her hand and lifting her up]*
Kneel not, gentle Portia.

PORTIA

I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.*
Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? Am I to keep
With you at meals, and talk to you sometimes?
If it be no more, Portia is not thy wife.

BRUTUS

You are my true and honorable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart. Portia, go in,

vows: solemn promises

unfold: reveal

heavy: sad

had resort to: visited

* Portia is saying that she would not need to kneel if Brutus were to act kindly and generously.

appertain: belong; relate

ruddy: having a fresh red color

And by and by thy bosom shall partake
The secrets of my heart.

[They exit in different directions.]

CITIZEN 4

Portia is troubled. She knows that Brutus has been hiding something from her.

CITIZEN 5

Nearby, Ceasar's wife, Calpurnia, is also troubled about her husband.

CITIZEN 6

Calpurnia has had a restless night, full of bad dreams.

SCENE II. CAESAR'S HOUSE.

[Thunder and lightning. Enter CAESAR, in his gown.]

CAESAR

Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace tonight.
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out,
"Help, ho! They murder Caesar!"

[Enter CALPURNIA.]

CALPURNIA

What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house today.

by and by: soon; in a little while

bosom: the human chest, where the heart is located, and so imagined to be the center of human emotions

partake: receive; have a share in

nor: neither

Think you to walk forth?: Do you intend to go out today?

stir: move

CAESAR

Caesar shall go forth.

CALPURNIA

Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,
Yet now they fright me. There is one within
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
Graves have yawned, and yielded up their dead;
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
O Caesar! these things are beyond all use,
And I do fear them.

CAESAR

Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.*

CALPURNIA

When beggars die, there are no comets seen.
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death
of princes.

CAESAR

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,

stood on ceremonies: believed in signs of things to come

one within: a person inside

recounts: tells about in detail

the watch: guards; night watchmen

yawned: opened wide (like a mouth)

yielded up: given forth, pushed out

hurtled: clashed; moved forcefully

beyond all use: completely out of the ordinary

* Caesar says that all these strange signs could be taken to apply to anyone, not just to himself.

valiant: brave and bold

Will come when it will come.
Caesar shall go forth. Danger knows full well
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.*

CALPURNIA

Alas, my lord,
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.
Do not go forth today. Call it my fear
That keeps you in the house, and not your own.
We'll send Mark Antony to the Senate House,
And he shall say you are not well today.
[She kneels.]
Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.

CAESAR *[giving in, helping her to rise]*

Mark Antony shall say I am not well,
And, for thy humor, I will stay at home.

[Enter DECIUS.]

Here's Decius; he shall tell them so.

DECIUS *[cheerfully]*

Caesar, all hail! Good morrow, worthy Caesar.
I come to fetch you to the Senate House.

CAESAR

And you are come in very happy time
To bear my greeting to the Senators
And tell them that I will not come today.

* Caesar speaks imaginatively of "Danger" as though it were a person. And Caesar claims that he is himself more dangerous than Danger.

prevail: win; succeed

for thy humor: to please you; for your sake

CALPURNIA

Say he is sick.

CAESAR

Shall Caesar send a lie?

Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

DECIUS *[caught off guard]*

Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,
Lest I be laughed at when I tell them so.

CAESAR

The cause is in my will. I will not come.

That is enough to satisfy the Senate.

But for your private satisfaction—*

Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home.

She dreamt tonight she saw my statue,

Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,

Did run pure blood; and many joyful Romans

Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.

And these does she perceive as warnings and
portents

Of evils imminent, and on her knee

Hath begged that I will stay at home today.

DECIUS

This dream is all amiss interpreted.

It was a vision fair and fortunate.

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,

In which so many smiling Romans bathed,

Signifies that from you great Rome shall drink

lest: for fear that

in my will: because that is what I desire

* By “private satisfaction,” Caesar means that he will offer an explanation to Decius for his ears alone.

stays me: keeps me here

portents: signs of some significant event to come

imminent: about to happen at any moment

amiss: wrongly

interpreted: explained (the meaning of)

signifies: means

Reviving blood. This the dream signified.
And know this now: the Senate have concluded
To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.
If you shall send them word you will not come,
Their minds may change.
Besides, it were a mock for some to say,*
"Break up the Senate till another time,
When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams."
If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper,
"Lo, Caesar is afraid"?

[CAESAR looks very displeased.]

Pardon me, Caesar, for my dear dear love
Bids me tell you this.

CAESAR

How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!
I am ashamed I did yield to them.
Give me my robe, for I will go.

[CALPURNIA exits to get his robe.]

CITIZEN 1

And so Caesar has chosen to ignore his wife's urging
to stay home.

CITIZEN 2

As he prepares to go to the Senate House, a group of
men arrive to accompany him.

reviving: energizing; life-restoring

signified: made known; meant

* Decius means: Some might mock you [Caesar] by saying....

yield: give in

CITIZEN 3

Caesar welcomes his visitors, unaware of what they are plotting.

[Enter BRUTUS, METELLUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, and CINNA.]

CAESAR

Welcome!

What, Brutus, are you stirred so early too?

What is't o'clock?

BRUTUS

Caesar, 'tis strucken eight.

[Enter ANTONY.]

CAESAR *[cheerfully]*

See! Antony, that revels long at night,

Is notwithstanding up. Good morrow, Antony.

ANTONY

So to most noble Caesar.

CAESAR *[to CALPURNIA, who has returned with the robe]*

Bid them prepare within.

[CALPURNIA exits.]

Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with me,
And we, like friends, will straightway go together.

'tis strucken eight: the clock has struck eight

revels: parties

notwithstanding: nevertheless; anyway

prepare within: get things ready inside

straightway: right away; very soon

BRUTUS *[aside]**

That every "like" is not the same, O Caesar,
The heart of Brutus grieves to think upon!**

[All exit.]

CITIZEN 4

And so Caesar is on his way to the Senate House.

CITIZEN 5

And with him go the very men who are plotting to
murder him.

CITIZEN 6

Meanwhile, in the street outside the house of
Brutus...

SCENE III. BEFORE THE HOUSE OF BRUTUS.

[Enter PORTIA, frantic, and LUCIUS, confused.]

PORTIA

I prithee, boy, run to the Senate House.
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone.
Why dost thou stay? Art thou here yet?

LUCIUS

Madam, what should I do?
Run to the Capitol, and nothing else?
And so return to you, and nothing else?

* In a play, when an actor speaks an *aside*, the lines are intended for the audience, and it is understood that the other actors do not hear them.

** Picking up on Caesar's words ("And we, like friends..."), Brutus says that it pains his heart to think that those who are *like* friends may not be friends at all.

prithce: a form of "pray thee," meaning "ask you, beg you"

PORTIA

Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,
For he went sickly forth. And take good note
What Caesar doth, what suitors press to him.
Hark, boy! What noise is that?

LUCIUS

I hear none, madam.

PORTIA

Prithee, listen well.
I heard a bustling rumor, like a fray,
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.

LUCIUS

Sooth, madam, I hear nothing.

[Enter the SOOTHSAYER.]

PORTIA *[to the SOOTHSAYER]*

Come hither, fellow.
Is Caesar yet gone to the Capitol?

SOOTHSAYER

Madam, not yet. I go to take my stand
And speak to great Caesar as he comes along.

PORTIA

Why, know'st thou any harms intended towards him?

thy lord: Brutus

take good note: pay close attention to

suitors: persons who come to make an official request or
ask a favor

press: stay close

hark: listen

bustling rumor: confused noise

fray: fight, quarrel

Sooth: truly

SOOTHSAYER

None that I know will be, much that I fear may chance.
Good morrow to you.

[He exits.]

PORTIA *[aside]*

O Brutus,

The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!*

[to Lucius]

Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord,

And bring me word what he doth say to thee.

*[They exit in different directions—PORTIA into her house,
LUCIUS to the Senate House.]*

may chance: might happen

* Portia wishes that the gods might help Brutus prosper in his mission.

commend me: give my best wishes

ACT 3

SCENE 1. NEAR THE SENATE HOUSE.

[The six CITIZENS enter. One places a chair upstage center.]

CITIZEN 1

Here we are at the Capitol, awaiting the arrival of...

ALL CITIZENS

Ceasar! Caesar! Caesar!

CITIZEN 2

Julius Caesar is making his way to the Senate House.

CITIZEN 3

Today he will hear from people who have come to make requests or ask favors.

[The CITIZENS step aside to make way. Enter CAESAR and ANTONY, followed by BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CASCA, DECIUS, METELLUS CIMBER, TREBONIUS, CINNA, and then two Senators, POPILIUS LENA and old PUBLIUS.]

CITIZEN 4

As Caesar nears the entrance to the Senate House, he sees a face he recognizes.

[Enter the SOOTHSAYER.]

CAESAR *[to the SOOTHSAYER]*
The ides of March are come.

SOOTHSAYER *[mysteriously]*
Ay, Caesar, but not gone.

[The SOOTHSAYER and all CITIZENS exit. CAESAR, frowning, turns away and goes up to the Senate House, the others following. As Caesar moves toward a chair, located upstage center, he mimes a conversation with ANTONY. As the others move toward their places, POPILIUS LENA pauses to speak to CASSIUS.]

POPILIUS LENA *[cheerfully, to CASSIUS]*
I wish your enterprise today may thrive.

CASSIUS *[nervously]*
What enterprise, Popilius?

POPILIUS LENA *[hurrying along]*
Fare you well.

[POPILIUS LENA goes to CAESAR, and they mime a friendly conversation. At the same time, TREBONIUS draws ANTONY aside, away from CAESAR.]

BRUTUS *[to CASSIUS]*
What said Popilius Lena?

mimes: silently acts out, through movements and gestures

thrive: be successful

CASSIUS *[anxiously]*

He wished today our enterprise might thrive.

I fear our purpose is discovered.

Brutus, what shall be done?

BRUTUS *[calming CASSIUS]*

Cassius, be constant.

Popilius Lena speaks not of our purposes.

For look, he smiles, and Caesar doth not change.

CASSIUS *[relieved]*

Trebonius knows his time, for look you Brutus,

He draws Mark Antony out of the way.

[TREBONIUS and ANTONY exit, in mimed conversation.]

DECIUS *[to CASSIUS and BRUTUS]*

Where is Metellus Cimber? Let him go

And presently prefer his suit to Caesar.

BRUTUS

He is ready. Press near and second him.

CINNA *[quietly to CASCA]*

Casca, you are the first that rears your hand.

CAESAR *[sitting down, calling the session to order]*

Are we all ready? What is now amiss

That Caesar and his Senate must redress?

discovered: pronounced as four syllables, *dis-cov-er-ed*

constant: calm, firm

look you: look (as a command or request)

presently: immediately

prefer his suit: make his request

second: support (his request)

rears: raises

amiss: wrong

redress: make right

METELLUS CIMBER *[kneeling before CAESAR]*

Most high, most mighty, and most puissant Caesar,
Metellus Cimber throws before thy seat
A humble heart.

CAESAR *[annoyed, having heard this all before]*

I must prevent thee, Cimber.

These couchings and these lowly courtesies

Might fire the blood of ordinary men.

But be not fond to think Caesar will be

Thawed by sweet words and base spaniel fawning.

Thy brother by decree is banishèd.

If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him,

I spurn thee like a cur out of my way.

METELLUS CIMBER *[appealing to the others]*

Is there no voice more worthy than my own

To sound more sweetly in great Caesar's ear

For the repealing of my banished brother?

BRUTUS *[kneeling]*

I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar,

Desiring thee that Publius Cimber may

Have an immediate freedom of repeal.*

CAESAR *[surprised]*

What, Brutus?

CASSIUS *[kneeling]*

Pardon, Caesar; Caesar, pardon!

As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall

To beg enfranchisement for Publius Cimber.

puissant (pronounced *PWIH-sunt*): powerful

prevent: stop from doing something

couchings: acts of kneeling down

lowly courtesies: low bows

fire: heat up; excite

fond: foolish

base spaniel fawning: lowly and dog-like excessive affection

decree: official order

banishèd (pronounced as three syllables, *ban-ish-ed*):

officially expelled from a country or place

pray: plead, beg

fawn: seek favor through excessive flattery and affection

spurn: kick

cur: a mongrel dog

repealing: undoing the official order (of banishment, in this case)

* Brutus asks that Caesar repeal the sentence of banishment and so give Publius Cimber (who is Metellus Cimber's brother) freedom to return to Rome. [Note that the banished Publius Cimber is not the same person as Publius, the Senator who is present in this scene.]

enfranchisement: restoration of citizenship

CAESAR *[standing]*

I could be well moved, if I were as you.*

But I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.**

I was constant Cimber should be banished
And constant do remain to keep him so.

CINNA *[coming toward CAESAR and kneeling]*

O Caesar—

CAESAR *[interrupting]*

Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?***

DECIUS *[coming toward CAESAR and kneeling]*

Great Caesar—

CAESAR

Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?

CASCA

Speak, hands, for me!

*[CASCA stabs CAESAR, and then the other conspirators
rise up and stab him. Last of all, BRUTUS approaches.]*

CAESAR

Et tu, Brutè?

[BRUTUS stabs him.]

Then fall, Caesar.

[He dies.]

* Caesar is saying that he might be moved to change his mind if he were like the men around him, whom he considers to be less firm of purpose than he is.

constant: unchanging; firm in one's belief or determination

northern star: the bright polestar, Polaris, that appears fixed in the sky

resting: unmoving

fellow: equal

firmament: the sky

** Caesar means that, in refusing to change his mind, he is as steady as the polestar, which appears still and unmoving in a way that no other star in the sky can match.

*** Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, was (in mythology) thought to be the home of the gods. So, to "lift up Olympus" is to do an impossible thing.

bootless: uselessly

Et tu, Brutè? (*BROO-tay*): Latin, meaning "You too, Brutus?"

CINNA

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!
Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets.

[A great commotion in the Senate House—cries, shouts, people stumbling about and running wildly.]

BRUTUS

People and Senators, be not affrighted.
Fly not; stand still. Ambition's debt is paid.*

[Enter TREBONIUS.]

CASSIUS *[to TREBONIUS]*

Where is Antony?

TREBONIUS

Fled to his house amazed.
Men, wives, and children stare, cry out and run
As it were doomsday.

BRUTUS

Where's Publius?

CINNA *[pointing to PUBLIUS, who is standing apart, frozen in fright]*
Here, quite confounded.

BRUTUS

Publius, good cheer.
There is no harm intended to your person,
Nor to no Roman else. So tell them, Publius.

proclaim: announce

affrighted: frightened

fly: flee, run away

* Brutus is saying that Caesar has now paid in full for his ambition.

amazed: stunned, shocked

confounded: bewildered, completely confused; stunned

good cheer: be cheerful

[PUBLIUS stares, terrified, and does not move.]

CASSIUS

And leave us, Publius.

[PUBLIUS backs away slowly, then turns and flees in terror. Now, only the conspirators remain.]

BRUTUS *[going to CAESAR's body and calling out]*

Stoop, Romans, stoop,

And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood

Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords.

Then walk we forth, even to the marketplace,

And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,

Let's all cry, "Peace, freedom, and liberty!"

CASSIUS *[leading the others]*

Stoop then, and wash.

[The conspirators dip their hands and blades in CAESAR's blood as CASSIUS speaks:]

How many ages hence

Shall this our lofty scene be acted over

In states unborn and accents yet unknown!*

So often shall the knot of us be called

The men that gave their country liberty.

[All actors onstage freeze. Offstage, the CITIZENS speak.]

CITIZEN 1

The deed is done.

stoop: bend down

besmear: spread all over

hence: from now; in the future

* Cassius imagines that in the future, people will re-enact this scene (the assassination of Caesar) in countries yet to be founded and in languages not yet known.

knot: group

CITIZEN 2

Brutus thinks the death of Caesar will bring peace, freedom, and liberty.

CITIZEN 3

And Cassius imagines that in future times, people will act out the scene and portray the conspirators as heroes who brought freedom to Rome.

[Enter ANTONY. All turn to look at him. He looks at the body of CAESAR. All freeze.]

CITIZEN 4

And what about Mark Antony?

CITIZEN 5

He was a close friend to Caesar. And remember, Cassius wanted to kill Antony along with Caesar.

CITIZEN 6

Will Antony go along with the conspirators? Or will he oppose them?

BRUTUS

Welcome, Mark Antony.

ANTONY *[staring at CAESAR's body]*

O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

spoils: goods and valuables taken from an enemy in war
this little measure: this small space [taken up by Caesar's corpse]

BRUTUS

O Antony, yet see you but our hands
And this the bleeding business they have done.
Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful,
And pity to the general wrong of Rome
Hath done this deed on Caesar.* For your part,
Only be patient till we have appeased
The multitude, beside themselves with fear;
And then we will deliver you the cause
Why I, that did love Caesar when I struck him,
Have thus proceeded.

ANTONY

I doubt not of your wisdom.
Let each man render me his bloody hand.
First, Marcus Brutus, will I shake with you.
Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand;
Now, Decius Brutus, yours; now yours, Metellus;
Yours, Cinna; and, my valiant Casca, yours.
Though last, not least in love, yours, good
Trebonius.—
Gentlemen all—alas, what shall I say?
[He looks again at CAESAR's body.]
That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true.
If then thy spirit look upon us now,
Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death
To see thy thy Anthony making his peace,
Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes—**
Most noble!***—in the presence of thy corpse?
Pardon me, Julius!

yet see you but: so far you have seen only

* Brutus says that while he and the other conspirators pity Caesar, it was their greater pity for Rome—threatened by Caesar's ambition (so they believed)—that drove them to act.

appeased: calmed, quieted

multitude: general public

deliver you: explain to you

I doubt not of: I do not doubt

render me: provide me, give me

** Antony says that if Caesar's spirit is looking on, it must hurt even more than death to see Antony making peace with Caesar's enemies and shaking the murderers' bloody hands.

*** "Most noble!" refers to Caesar, specifically his "spirit" that Antony mentioned a few lines earlier.

CASSIUS

Mark Antony—

ANTONY

Pardon me, Caius Cassius.

CASSIUS

I blame you not for praising Caesar so.
But what compact mean you to have with us?
Will you be counted in number of our friends?

ANTONY

Therefore I took your hands, but was indeed
Swayed from the point by looking down on Caesar.
Friends am I with you all and love you all,
Upon this hope, that you shall give me reasons
Why and wherein Caesar was dangerous.

BRUTUS

Our reasons are so full of good regard
That were you, Antony, the son of Caesar,
You should be satisfied.

ANTONY

That's all I seek.
And moreover, I do ask that I may
Produce his body to the marketplace,
And in the pulpit, as becomes a friend,
Speak in the order of his funeral.

BRUTUS

You shall, Mark Antony.

compact: agreement

Therefore: For that reason [that is, because I am your friend]

wherein: in what way

good regard: virtuous thought

were you: if you were

produce: bring forth

pulpit: a platform for public speaking

CASSIUS

Brutus, a word with you.

[Aside to BRUTUS]

You know not what you do. Do not consent
That Antony speak in his funeral.
Know you how much the people may be moved
By that which he will utter?

BRUTUS *[aside to CASSIUS]*

I will myself into the pulpit first,
And show the reason of our Caesar's death.
It shall advantage more than do us wrong.

CASSIUS *[urgently]*

I know not what may fall. I like it not.

BRUTUS *[turning away from CASSIUS]*

Mark Antony, here, take you Caesar's body.
You shall not in your funeral speech blame us,
But speak all good you can devise of Caesar,
And say you do't by our permission,
Else shall you not have any hand at all
About his funeral.

ANTONY

Be it so. I do desire no more.

BRUTUS

Prepare the body then, and follow us.

[All exit but ANTONY.]

utter: speak

will myself: will go myself

advantage: benefit; do [us] good

fall: befall, happen

all good you can devise: all the good things you can think of

do't: do it

have any hand at all / About: have any role in

ANTONY *[to CAESAR's body]*

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy,
And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war.

[Enter Octavius's SERVANT.]

SERVANT *[shocked, seeing Caesar's body]*

O Caesar!

ANTONY

They heart is big. Get thee apart and weep.

[Then, recognizing the Servant:]

You serve Octavius Caesar, do you not?

Is thy master coming?

SERVANT

I do, Mark Antony.

He lies tonight within seven leagues of Rome.

ANTONY

Post back with speed and tell him what hath chanced.

Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome.

Hie hence, and tell him so.

tide of times: course of history

prophecy: predict

domestic: relating to the homeland [of Italy]

civil strife: civil war

cumber: encumber; weigh down

ranging: roaming; moving around in search of prey

revenge: getting back at someone; punishing someone for an injury done to you

confines: regions; borders

monarch: an absolute ruler (such as a king or emperor)

havoc: widespread destruction [As a battle cry, "Havoc!" means to slaughter and destroy all.]

let slip: unleash

big: full [of sadness]

Octavius Caesar: Julius Caesar's great-nephew and adopted son

seven leagues: about 20 miles (a league is a distance of about three miles, or 4.8 kilometers)

Post: ride quickly

chanced: happened

mourning: sorrowing for someone's death

Hie hence: hurry away

[The SERVANT turns to leave but Antony calls him back.]

Yet stay awhile;
Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corpse
Into the marketplace. There shall I try,
In my oration, how the people take
The cruel issue of these bloody men.
Lend me your hand.

*[They exit with CAESAR's body.]**

[The six CITIZENS enter. They place the pulpit—a small platform or a lectern—at center stage. From here, Brutus will speak, and then Antony.]

CITIZEN 1

The conspirators think the assassination of Caesar will bring “peace, freedom, and liberty.”

CITIZEN 2

But Mark Antony sees a very different future, in which Rome is torn by civil war.

CITIZEN 3

Indeed, war will come—and Antony will join together with Octavius, whose troops are near Rome.

CITIZEN 4

Octavius is Julius Caesar's great-nephew, and adopted son and heir.

back: return; go back

borne: transported

try: test

oration: public speech

issue: action; outcome

* PRODUCTION NOTE: In performance, an intermission might occur at this point in the play.

heir: a person who inherits property or a position from another person after that person's death

CITIZEN 5

News of the assassination has spread quickly through the city. Great crowds have gathered here in the forum, our city's central marketplace.

CITIZEN 6

And the people are confused and angry.

[The CITIZENS become members of the angry crowd.]

SCENE 2. THE FORUM.

[Enter BRUTUS to face the crowd of angry citizens.]

CITIZEN 4

We will be satisfied!

CITIZEN 5

Let us be satisfied!

BRUTUS *[Moving to the pulpit, trying to quiet the crowd]*

Then give me audience, friends,
And public reasons shall be rendered
Of Caesar's death.

CITIZEN 6

Let us hear Brutus speak. Silence!

be satisfied: have our demands met

give me audience: listen to what I have to say

rendered: provided, given

BRUTUS*

Romans and countrymen, hear me for my cause, and believe me for my honor, and have respect to my honor. If there be in this assembly any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him. But, as he was ambitious,** I slew him. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

ALL CITIZENS

None, Brutus, none.

BRUTUS

Then none have I offended.

ALL CITIZENS

Long live Brutus!

CITIZEN 1

Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

* Shakespeare writes Brutus's speech in prose, not poetry. Contrast this speech to Marc Antony's speech, later in this scene.

** In calling Caesar ambitious, Brutus means that he was excessively greedy for power.

slew (past tense of *slay*): killed

base: low

bondman: slave

offended: wronged

rude: uncivilized

CITIZEN 2

Give him a statue with his ancestors.

CITIZEN 3

Let him be Caesar.

[As the crowd shouts and cheers, ANTONY enters (with helpers), carrying CAESAR's covered body.]

BRUTUS *[trying to speak over the crowd]*

My countrymen—

CITIZEN 4

Peace, silence! Brutus speaks.

BRUTUS

Good countrymen, let me depart alone,
And, for my sake, stay here with Antony.
By our permission, he is allowed to speak.
I do entreat you, not a man depart,
Save I alone, till Antony have spoke.

[The citizens cheer as BRUTUS exits.]

CITIZEN 1 *[to his fellow citizens]*

Let us hear Mark Antony.

CITIZEN 2

We'll hear him. Noble Antony, go up.

ANTONY

For Brutus' sake, I am beholden to you.

Save: except

beholden: obliged; indebted

[He goes to the pulpit.]

CITIZEN 3 *[suspiciously]*

What does he say of Brutus?

CITIZEN 4

'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here.

CITIZEN 5

This Caesar was a tyrant.

CITIZEN 6

We are blest that Rome is rid of him.

CITIZEN 1

Peace! Let us hear what Antony can say.

ANTONY

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interrèd with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus

Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.

If it were so, it was a grievous fault,

And grievously hath Caesar answered it.

Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest

(For Brutus is an honorable man;

So are they all, all honorable men),

Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.

He was my friend, faithful and just to me,

lend me your ears: listen to me; give me your attention

interrèd (pronounced as three syllables, *in-TER-red*):
buried in the earth

grievous: serious

under leave of: with the permission of

But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And sure he is an honorable man.
You all did love him once, not without cause.
What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him?
Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

CITIZEN 1

Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

CITIZEN 2

Caesar has had great wrong.

CITIZEN 3

He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.

ransoms: monies (or other valuables) paid for the release of prisoners

coffers: boxes or chests, especially for holding valuable items [The “general coffers” are the public treasury.]

withholds you: holds you back; prevents you

Methinks: I think

CITIZEN 4

There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.

CITIZEN 5

Poor soul! His eyes are red as fire with weeping.

CITIZEN 6

Now mark him, he begins again to speak.

ANTONY

O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honorable men.
[He holds up a rolled piece of paper.]
But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar—
I found it in his closet, 'tis his will—
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read.
[He puts the parchment in his robe or pocket.]

CITIZEN 1

We'll hear the will!

CITIZEN 2

Read it, Mark Antony!

CITIZEN 3

We will hear Caesar's will!

ALL CITIZENS

The will! The will!

mark: observe; take notice of

masters: sirs

disposed: inclined

mutiny: resistance to or rebellion against an authority

parchment: sheepskin or goatskin used for writing on

seal: official symbol

closet: private room

will: a legal document expressing one's wishes for what is to be done with one's property after death

ANTONY

Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it.
It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men.
And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad.
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs,
For, if you should, O, what would come of it!

CITIZEN 4

Read the will. We'll hear it, Antony!

ANTONY

I fear I wrong the honorable men
Whose daggers have stabbed Caesar; I do fear it.

CITIZEN 5

They were traitors!

CITIZEN 6

They were villains, murderers!

ALL CITIZENS

The will! Read the will!

ANTONY

You will compel me, then, to read the will?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
And let me show you him that made the will.

*[ANTONY comes down from the pulpit; the CITIZENS
gather around the body of CAESAR.]*

meet: fitting, proper, appropriate

heirs: those who inherit property or something else
of value

compel: force

CITIZEN 1

Room for Antony, most noble Antony.

[From under the cloth covering the corpse, ANTONY pulls CAESAR's bloody robe.]

ANTONY

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

[He holds up the bloody robe.]

You all do know this mantle.

Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through.

See what a rent the envious Casca made.

Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed.

This was the most unkindest cut of all.

For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,

Then burst his mighty heart.

CITIZEN 2

O noble Caesar!

CITIZEN 3

O woeful day!

ANTONY

O, now you weep; these are gracious drops.

Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold

Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,

Here is himself, marred, as you see, by traitors.*

[He lifts the cloth covering CAESAR's body to reveal the bloody corpse.]

mantle: cloak

rent: rip, tear

envious: resentful

belovèd: pronounced as three syllables, *be-lov-ed*

gracious: kind, merciful

vesture: clothing

marred: severely disfigured or damaged

* Antony stirs up the emotions of the crowd by saying: Do you cry just to see Caesar's torn garment? Then look here at his body, mangled by traitors.

CITIZEN 4

O traitors, villains!

CITIZEN 5

O most bloody sight!

CITIZEN 6

We will be revenged!

ALL

Revenge! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!

ANTONY

Stay, countrymen.

CITIZEN 1

Peace there! Hear the noble Antony.

ANTONY

Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.

They that have done this deed are honorable.

I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts.

I am no orator, as Brutus is,

But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man.

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood. I only speak right on.

ALL

We'll mutiny!

Slay: kill

Stay: stop; wait

orator: public speaker, especially a talented speaker

wit: intelligence; cleverness

utterance: skill in speaking

right on: directly, straightforwardly

CITIZEN 2

We'll burn the house of Brutus.

ANTONY

Yet hear me, countrymen; yet hear me speak.

CITIZEN 3

Peace! Hear Antony, most noble Antony!

ANTONY

Friends, you have forgot the will I told you of.

[He holds up the parchment.]

CITIZEN 4

Most true.

CITIZEN 5

The will!

CITIZEN 6

Let's stay and hear the will.

ANTONY

Here is the will, and under Caesar's seal.

[He unrolls the parchment.]

To every Roman citizen he gives,

To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.

every several: each individual

drachmas (pronounced *DRAK-muhz*): silver coins

CITIZEN 1

Most noble Caesar!

CITIZEN 2

We'll revenge his death!

CITIZEN 3

O royal Caesar!

CITIZEN 4

We'll burn the house of Brutus.

CITIZEN 5

Go fetch fire.

CITIZEN 6

Take up the body. Come, away, away!

*[Carrying the body of CAESAR, the citizens exit, with
bloodthirsty cries and shouts.]*

ANTONY

Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt!

[He exits.]

Mischief: troubles, evil-doing

afoot: underway; in motion

SCENE 3. A STREET IN THE MARKETPLACE.

[Enter CINNA THE POET, jotting down words in a small booklet, and muttering aloud to himself words like "love, above, dove..."—then, struck by a memory, he speaks.]

CINNA THE POET

I dreamt tonight that I did feast with Caesar,
And things unlucky charge my fantasy.

[Enter CITIZENS 4, 5, and 6, confronting CINNA THE POET threateningly.]

CITIZEN 4

What is your name?

CITIZEN 5

Whither are you going?

CITIZEN 6

Where do you dwell?

CITIZEN 4

Are you a married man?

CITIZEN 5

Or a bachelor?

CITIZEN 6

Answer every man directly.

things unlucky: troubling signs

charge my fantasy: burden my imagination

dwell: live; reside

CITIZEN 4

Ay, and briefly.

CITIZEN 5

Ay, and wisely.

CITIZEN 6

Ay, and truly.

CINNA THE POET *[flustered]*

What is my name? Whither am I going? Where do I dwell? Am I a married man or a bachelor? Then, to answer every man directly and briefly, wisely and truly—wisely I say, I am a bachelor.

CITIZEN 4

That's as much as to say, they are fools that marry.

[Raising his fist threateningly.]

You'll bear me a bang for that. Proceed, directly.

CINNA THE POET *[confused]*

Directly, I am going to Caesar's funeral.

CITIZEN 5

As a friend or an enemy?

CINNA THE POET

As a friend.

CITIZEN 6

Your name, sir, truly.

as much as to say: the same as saying

bear me a bang: be punched by me

CINNA THE POET

Truly, my name is Cinna.

CITIZEN 4

Tear him to pieces! He's a conspirator.

CINNA THE POET

I am Cinna the poet! I am Cinna the poet!

CITIZEN 5

Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses!

CINNA THE POET

I am not Cinna the conspirator.

CITIZEN 6

It is no matter. His name's Cinna.

ALL

Tear him, tear him!

[They exit, shouting, chasing CINNA offstage.]

ACT 4

CITIZEN 1

Rome is in chaos. Brutus and Cassius have fled the city, and are gathering troops to prepare for war.

CITIZEN 2

Antony has joined with Octavius Caesar, Julius Caesar's adopted son, who has now arrived in Rome.

[Enter ANTONY and OCTAVIUS. ANTONY holds a list. He and OCTAVIUS look at the list and (silently) discuss it.]

CITIZEN 3

Octavius and Antony are meeting to plan how to take control of Rome.

[Enter LEPIDUS. He looks at ANTONY and OCTAVIUS but they ignore him.]

CITIZEN 4

They have enlisted a senator named Lepidus to be a third leader of Rome—but Antony does not think much of him.

CITIZEN 5

The three men have drawn up a list of their political enemies.

[ANTONY holds up the list.]

CITIZEN 6

And now, they are calmly marking off those that they intend to—um—eliminate.

SCENE 1. A HOUSE IN ROME.

ANTONY [*pointing at the list*]

These many, then, shall die. Their names are marked.

OCTAVIUS [*to LEPIDUS*]

Your brother too must die. Consent you, Lepidus?

LEPIDUS

I do consent.

OCTAVIUS

Mark him down, Antony.

[*ANTONY makes a mark on the list.*]

LEPIDUS [*to ANTONY*]

Upon condition Publius shall not live,
Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

ANTONY

He shall not live. Look, with a spot I damn him.*
But, Lepidus, go you to Caesar's house.
Fetch the will hither.

LEPIDUS

Shall I find you here?

Consent you: Do you agree

* Antony makes a mark (a "spot") on the list by the name of Publius, thus condemning him to death.

OCTAVIUS

Or here, or at the Capitol.

[Exit LEPIDUS.]

ANTONY *[looking with scorn after LEPIDUS]*

This is a slight unmeritable man,
Meet to be sent on errands.

OCTAVIUS

But he's a tried and valiant soldier.

ANTONY

So is my horse.

And now, Octavius, listen great things.
Brutus and Cassius are levying powers.
Therefore let our alliance be combined,
And let us go presently determine
How open perils may be surest answered.

OCTAVIUS

Let us do so, for we have many enemies.

[They exit.]

SCENE 2. CAMP NEAR SARDIS.**CITIZEN 1***

Months later, hundreds of miles to the east of Rome,
Brutus and Cassius have separately managed to
gather troops to fight for them.

Or: either

slight: of little importance

unmeritable: worthless

Meet: fit

tried: proven; experienced

listen great things: hear these important points

levying: enlisting (troops for military service)

powers: armies

let our alliance be combined: let our forces be strengthened by joining together

presently determine: immediately figure out

open perils: the threats we can plainly see

surest answered: most effectively dealt with

* PRODUCTION NOTE: At this time, one of the citizens or a stagehand should place a small table at center stage.

CITIZEN 2

By messenger, they have agreed to meet near a city in Turkey called Sardis. But suspicions and resentment now divide the two men.

CITIZEN 3

Brutus, who prizes his honor, thinks that one of Cassius's followers and possibly Cassius himself have taken bribes in order to pay the troops.

[Sound of military drums. Enter BRUTUS from one side and CASSIUS from the other.]

CASSIUS *[angrily]*

Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.

BRUTUS

Speak your griefs softly. I do know you well.

CASSIUS *[even more heatedly]*

You have condemned and noted Lucius Pella
For taking bribes here of the Sardians.

BRUTUS

Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself
Are much condemned to have an itching palm,
To sell and mart your offices for gold.

CASSIUS *[enraged]*

I an itching palm!

You know that you are Brutus that speak this,
Or, by the gods, this speech were else your last.

grievs: grievances; complaints

condemned: found guilty

noted: publicly shamed; disgraced

Sardians: people of the city of Sardis

condemned to have: accused of having

itching palm: a figure of speech describing a person who is greedy for money

mart: trade in

offices: services

BRUTUS

Remember March; the ides of March remember.
Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
What villain touched his body that did stab
And not for justice?* What, and shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?
I had rather be a dog and bay the moon
Than such a Roman.

CASSIUS

I'll not endure it. I am a soldier, I,
Older in practice, abler than yourself
To make conditions.

BRUTUS

You are not, Cassius.

CASSIUS

I am.

BRUTUS

I say you are not.

CASSIUS

Have mind upon your health. Tempt me no farther.**

BRUTUS

Away, slight man!

CASSIUS

O ye gods, ye gods! Must I endure all this?

for justice' sake: for the sake of justice

* Brutus says that all who stabbed Caesar did so only for the cause of justice.

Contaminate: to make unclean or impure

bay: bark at; howl at

endure: put up with

abler: more capable; more skilled

make conditions: give commands; manage affairs

** Cassius is warning Brutus not to provoke him to an action that might prove harmful to Brutus.

BRUTUS

All this! Ay, more.

You say you are a better soldier.

Let it appear so. Make your vaunting true.

CASSIUS

You wrong me every way. You wrong me, Brutus.

I said an elder soldier, not a better.

Did I say "better"?

BRUTUS

If you did, I care not.

CASSIUS

Do not presume too much upon my love.*

I may do that I shall be sorry for.

BRUTUS

You have done that you should be sorry for.

There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,

For I am armed so strong in honesty

That they pass by me as the idle wind,

Which I respect not. I did send to you

For certain sums of gold to pay my legions,

Which you denied me. Was that done like Cassius?

Should I have answered Caius Cassius so?

CASSIUS *[puzzled]*

I denied you not.

BRUTUS *[furiously]*

You did!

Let it appear so: prove it; show it
vaunting: bragging

elder: older

* Cassius warns Brutus not to think that his (Cassius's) love gives him (Brutus) the right to do or say whatever he wants.

idle: inactive; lazy
send to you: sent a message asking you
legions: troops, soldiers

CASSIUS

I did not! He was but a fool that brought

My answer back.*

[He takes out his dagger and places it on the table.]

There is my dagger,

And here *[patting his chest]*, within, a heart richer
than gold.

I that denied thee gold will give my heart.**

Strike as thou didst at Caesar.

BRUTUS

Sheathe your dagger.

O Cassius, when I spoke, I was ill-tempered.

CASSIUS

Do you confess so much? Give me your hand.

BRUTUS

And my heart too.

[They shake hands.]

CASSIUS

I did not think you could have been so angry.

BRUTUS

O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

Portia is dead.

CASSIUS *[shocked]*

What? Your wife?

* Cassius says that the messenger who brought his answer back to Brutus was a fool (who, presumably, delivered a confused or mistaken message to Brutus).

** Cassius is saying: I who (so you say), refused to give you gold, will give you my heart [to stab with my dagger].

sick of: worn out by

BRUTUS

She is dead.

CASSIUS

Upon what sickness?

BRUTUS

Impatient of my absence,
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony
Have made themselves so strong, she fell distract.

CASSIUS

Portia, art thou gone?

*[Enter LUCIUS, carrying a tray with a pitcher, two bowls,
and a book. He puts the tray on the table.]*

BRUTUS *[to CASSIUS]*

No more, I pray you.
I have the patience to endure it now.

[to LUCIUS]

Give me a bowl of wine.

[LUCIUS pours a bowl of wine and hands it to BRUTUS.]

CASSIUS

Fill, Lucius, till the wine o'erswell the cup.

*[LUCIUS pours a bowl of wine and hands it to CASSIUS.
LUCIUS then retires to a corner, where he soon falls
asleep.]*

Impatient of my absence: worried about my being away so long

fell distract: lost her reason, went mad [Portia, in desperation, took her own life.]

o'erswell: overflow

BRUTUS *[raising his bowl to CASSIUS]*

In this I bury all unkindness, Cassius.

[They drink.]

[CITIZENS 4-6 address the audience.]

CITIZEN 4

The two friends have gotten beyond their argument, but they face a great challenge ahead.

CITIZEN 5

They must lead their troops into battle against the forces led by Octavius and Antony.

CITIZEN 6

And they must decide where to meet the enemy. They can either wait for Octavius and Antony to come here to Sardis...

CITIZEN 4

Or they can march hundreds of miles to fight Octavius and Antony at Philippi, in northern Greece.

CITIZEN 5

Cassius wants to stay in Sardis, so that their enemies will wear themselves out in marching to meet them.

CITIZEN 6

But Brutus is worried that the people around Sardis

Philippi: pronounced *fih-LIP-eye*

do not like the army's presence. So Brutus argues that, like ships waiting for high tide to set sail, they must proceed when the time is right.

BRUTUS *[placing his wine bowl on the table]*

Well, to our work.

Cassius, I have here received letters

That young Octavius and Mark Antony

Come down upon us with a mighty power,

Bending their expedition toward Philippi.

What do you think of marching to Philippi presently?

CASSIUS

I do not think it good.

BRUTUS

Your reason?

CASSIUS

This it is:

'Tis better that the enemy seek us—

So shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers,

Doing himself offence, whilst we, lying still,

Are full of rest, defense, and nimbleness.

BRUTUS

Good reasons must of force give place to better.

The people 'twixt Philippi and this ground

Do stand but in a forced affection.*

received: pronounced as three syllables, *re-ceiv-ed*

power: army

Bending their expedition: directing [their troops] with haste

presently: immediately

means: resources, supplies

offence: harm

whilst: while

nimbleness: readiness to act quickly

of force: of necessity

* Brutus is saying that the local people are cooperating only because they have been forced to.

CASSIUS *[breaking in]*

Hear me, good brother—

BRUTUS *[interrupting him]*

Our legions are brim-full, our cause is ripe.

There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

On such a full sea are we now afloat,

And we must take the current when it serves,

Or lose our ventures.*

CASSIUS

Then we'll go on, and meet them at Philippi.

BRUTUS

The deep of night is crept upon our talk.

There is no more to say?

CASSIUS

O my dear brother!

Never come such division 'tween our souls!**

Let it not, Brutus.

BRUTUS

Everything is well.

CASSIUS

Good night, my lord.

brim-full: full to the brim (like a filled cup)

ripe: ready

at the flood: at high tide

fortune: luck; success

Omitted: not taken

* Brutus compares people who are about to take some important action to ships about to depart on an ocean voyage. We must act when the time is right, says Brutus, just as ships must set sail when the tide is high ("at the flood"). To miss this opportunity is to be like a ship stuck in low water ("bound in shallows"). The tide, says Brutus, is now high ("a full sea"), so they must act now ("take the current") or risk losing all they have invested.

'tween: between

** Cassius hopes that he and Brutus will never again be divided by such conflict.

BRUTUS

Good night, good brother.

[CASSIUS exits.]

BRUTUS *[with a tired sigh, picking up the book from the table]*

Let me see, let me see. Is not the leaf turned down
Where I left reading? Here it is, I think.

[Enter the Ghost of Caesar.]

Ha! Who comes here?

Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That makest my blood cold and my hair to stare?
Speak to me what thou art.

GHOST

Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

BRUTUS

Why comest thou?

GHOST

To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.

BRUTUS

Why, I will see thee at Philippi, then.

[The ghost exits.]

the leaf turned down: the page [of the book] bent

left: left off; paused

stare: stand on end

Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee.

[Noticing the sleeping LUCIUS]

Boy, Lucius! Awake!

Didst thou see anything?

LUCIUS *[confused, yawning]*

Nothing, my lord.

BRUTUS

Go and commend me to my brother Cassius.

Bid him set on his powers betimes before,

And we will follow.

LUCIUS

It shall be done, my lord.

[They exit in different directions.]

III: evil

set on his powers: get his troops moving

betimes before: early and before me

ACT 5

SCENE 1: THE PLAINS AT PHILIPPI.

CITIZEN 1

And so Brutus and Cassius lead their troops on the long journey, hundreds of miles, to the plains of Philippi.

CITIZEN 2

There, the combined forces of Octavius and Antony await them.

CITIZEN 3

Before the battle begins, the four commanders meet.

[Sound of military drums. From one side, enter BRUTUS and CASSIUS. From the opposite side, enter OCTAVIUS and ANTONY.]

BRUTUS

Words before blows—is it so, countrymen?

OCTAVIUS

Not that we love words better, as you do.

BRUTUS

Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius.

Words before blows: talk before fighting

strokes: hits from a weapon

ANTONY

In your bad strokes,* Brutus, you give good words.
Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart,
Crying "Long live, hail, Caesar!"

OCTAVIUS *[drawing his sword]*

Look, I draw a sword against conspirators.
When think you that the sword goes up again?
Never till Caesar's three and thirty wounds
Be well avenged.

CASSIUS *[scornfully]*

A peevish schoolboy,
Joined with a masker and a reveler!**

OCTAVIUS

Come, Antony, away.
Defiance, traitors, hurl we in your teeth.
If you dare fight today, come to the field;
If not, when you have stomachs.

[OCTAVIUS and ANTONY exit.]

CASSIUS

Now, most noble Brutus, may the gods today
Stand friendly and lead on our days to age.
But since the affairs of men rest still uncertain,
Let's reason with the worst that may befall.
If we do lose this battle, then is this
The very last time we shall speak together.
What are you then determinèd to do?

* By “bad strokes,” Antony means the stabs that Brutus made with his dagger when Caesar was murdered.

Witness: consider as proof

goes up again: goes back into its sheath

avenged: gotten back at someone on someone else's behalf; punished someone for an injury or wrong

peevish: whining, grumpy

** Cassius insults his enemies by comparing the young Octavius to a cranky schoolboy, and dismissing Antony as someone who likes to wear masks and party.

have stomachs: have an appetite [for battle]

lead on our days to age: let us live to old age

rest still: remain always

reason with: consider

befall: happen

determinèd: pronounced as four syllables, *de-ter-min-ed*

BRUTUS

I did blame Cato for the death
Which he did give himself.* I know not why,
But I do find it cowardly and vile.**

CASSIUS

Then if we lose this battle
You are contented to be led in triumph
Through the streets of Rome?

BRUTUS

No, Cassius, no. Think not, thou noble Roman,
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome.
He bears too great a mind.*** But this same day
Must end that work the ides of March began.
And whether we shall meet again I know not.
Therefore our everlasting farewell take.
Forever and forever farewell, Cassius.
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then, this parting was well made.

CASSIUS

Forever and forever farewell, Brutus.
If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed;
If not, 'tis true this parting was well made.

BRUTUS

Why, then, lead on. O, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known.

[They exit.]

* Brutus here refers to Portia's father, Marcus Porcius Cato, a senator who took the side of Pompey against Caesar. When faced with capture by Caesar, Cato killed himself, following the ancient Roman belief that it was more honorable for a leader to take his own life than to be taken captive.

** Brutus says that he doesn't know why, but he thinks suicide is cowardly and immoral.

led in triumph: paraded as a captive

bound: held captive (by chains, ropes, or the like)

*** Brutus has said that he considers it cowardly to take one's own life. But here he says that his thoughts are too lofty and noble to ever let himself be captured and led in chains through the streets of Rome.

this same day: this day, today

ere: before

it sufficeth: it is enough

SCENE 2. IN THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

[Sound of military drums. Offstage, the sounds of battle—weapons clashing, shouts and cries.]

[Enter CASSIUS and TITINIUS, breathless from fighting.]

TITINIUS

O Cassius, Brutus gave the word too early.
Now we by Antony are all enclosed.

[Enter PINDARUS.]

PINDARUS *[urgently, to CASSIUS]*

Fly further off, my lord, fly further off!
Mark Antony is in your tents, my lord.
Fly, therefore, noble Cassius, fly far off!

CASSIUS

This hill is far enough.
[pointing offstage into the distance]
Look, look, Titinius.
Are those my tents where I perceive the fire?

TITINIUS

They are, my lord.

CASSIUS

Titinius,
Mount thou my horse, that I may rest assured
Whether yond troops are friend or enemy.

gave the word: issued the orders

TITINIUS

I will be here again, even with a thought.

[He exits.]

CASSIUS

Go, Pindarus, get higher on that hill.

Regard Titinius,

And tell me what thou notest about the field.

[As PINDARUS goes up, CASSIUS thinks aloud:]

This is my birthday, as this very day
Was Cassius born.

This day I breathèd first. Time is come round,
And where I did begin, there shall I end.
My life is run his compass.

[calling out to PINDARUS on the hill]

Sirrah, what news?

PINDARUS *[dismayed]*

O, my lord! Titinius is enclosèd round about
With horsemen. Yet he spurs on.
Now they are almost on him. O, he's taken.

[a shout offstage]

And, hark, they shout for joy.

CASSIUS

Come down, behold no more.

be here again: return
even with a thought: in an instant

regard: watch; keep an eye on
what thou notest: what you observe
about the field: happening on the field of battle

breathèd: pronounced as two syllables, *breathe-ed*

is run his compass: has come full circle

Sirrah (pronounced *SIHR-uh*): a term used to address a man or boy who is younger or lower in status than the speaker

enclosèd round about: surrounded [*enclosèd* is pronounced as three syllables, *en-clos-ed*]

[PINDARUS comes down.]

O, coward that I am, to live so long,
To see my best friend taken before my face!

[to PINDARUS]

Come hither, sirrah.

In Parthia did I take thee prisoner,
And then I swore thee, saving of thy life,
That whatsoever I did bid thee do
Thou shouldst attempt it.* Come now, keep
thine oath.

Now be a free man, and with this good sword,
That ran through Caesar's bowels, search this bosom.

[PINDARUS backs away. CASSIUS puts the sword in his hand and speaks calmly.]

Here, take thou the hilt.

[He pulls his cloak over his face.]

And when my face is covered, as 'tis now,
Guide thou the sword.

[PINDARUS stabs him; CASSIUS falls, gasping.]

Caesar, thou art revenged,
Even with the sword that killed thee.

[He dies.]

PINDARUS *[deeply upset]*

So I am free, yet would not so have been.
O Cassius!

* Cassius recalls how, in a battle at Parthia, he captured Pindarus and spared his life, while making Pindarus swear that he would do whatever Cassius might ask him to do.

bowels: guts

search this bosom: probe into my chest [that is, stab me in the heart]

hilt: the handle of a sword or dagger

[He runs away.]

[Enter TITINIUS, with a wreath on his head.]*

TITINIUS *[looking for CASSIUS]*

My tidings will well comfort Cassius.

[He sees the body and goes to it.]

O, my heart! Cassius is no more.

The sun of Rome is set! Our day is gone.

Mistrust of my success hath done this deed.**

O hateful error!

Why didst thou send me forth, brave Cassius?

Did I not meet thy friends, and did not they

Put on my brows this wreath of victory

And bid me give it thee? Didst thou not hear their
shouts?

Alas, thou hast misconstrued everything.

But hold thee, take this garland on thy brow.

Thy Brutus bid me give it thee, and I

Will do his bidding.

[He places the wreath on Cassius's head.]

Brutus, come apace,

And see how I regarded Caius Cassius.

By your leave, gods, this is a Roman's part.

Come, Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart.

[He stabs himself and dies.]

[Enter BRUTUS with three soldiers, CLITO, STRATO, and VOLUMNIUS. BRUTUS sees the dead bodies and goes to them. The soldiers stand apart, watching.]

* Worn round the forehead, the wreath (made from the grass and plants on the field of battle) is a symbol of victory.

tidings: news

well comfort: encourage

** Titinius is saying that because Cassius thought Titinius had not succeeded in his mission, Cassius took his own life.

misconstrued: misunderstood

hold thee: wait a moment

garland: a circular arrangement of flowers

do his bidding: do what he asked

apace: quickly

regarded: held in honor; respected

By your leave: with your permission

this is a Roman's part: this is what a Roman must do

BRUTUS *[staring at the corpses]*

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!

Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords

In our own proper entrails.

[He kneels and touches CASSIUS's shoulder.]

The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!

It is impossible that ever Rome

Should breed thy fellow. *[to the soldiers]* Friends, I
owe more tears

To this dead man than you shall see me pay.

[to CASSIUS]

I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time.

[to the soldiers]

Yet, countrymen, O, yet hold up your heads!

We shall try fortune in a second fight.

[They exit, taking the bodies with them.]

SCENE 3. ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD.

[Sound of military drums. Offstage, the sound of fierce fighting—weapons clashing, shouts of victory, cries of agony. Enter BRUTUS, followed by CLITUS, STRATO, and VOLUMNIUS, all bloody and exhausted.]

BRUTUS

Come, poor remains of friends, rest on this rock.

[The three soldiers move wearily toward BRUTUS; two sit but BRUTUS pulls CLITUS aside. STRATO falls asleep.]

In our own proper entrails: into our own stomachs

breed thy fellow: give birth to your equal

try fortune: take our chances

BRUTUS

Hark thee, Clitus.

[He whispers to CLITUS.]

CLITUS *[shocked]*

What, I, my lord? No, not for all the world.
I'll rather kill myself.

[Drawing away from BRUTUS, CLITUS sits apart.]

BRUTUS

Come hither, good Volumnius.

VOLUMNIUS *[coming to BRUTUS]*

What says my lord?

BRUTUS

Why, this, Volumnius:

The ghost of Caesar hath appeared to me
Two several times by night—at Sardis once,
And this last night, here in Philippi fields.
I know my hour is come.

VOLUMNIUS

Not so, my lord.

BRUTUS

Nay, I am sure it is, Volumnius.
Our enemies have beat us to the pit.
It is more worthy to leap in ourselves,

Hark thee: listen

several: separate

my hour is come: the time (of my death) has arrived

beat us to the pit: driven us into a trap (like a pit dug to capture an animal)

Than tarry till they push us. Good Volumnius,
Hold thou my sword-hilt, whilst I run on it.

VOLUMNIUS [*backing away*]

That's not an office for a friend, my lord.

[Sound of drums and shouts of battle offstage]

CLITUS [*in fear*]

Fly, fly, my lord! There is no tarrying here.

BRUTUS

I shall have glory by this losing day
More than Octavius and Mark Antony
By this vile conquest.

[More shouts of battle]

CLITUS

Fly, my lord, fly!

BRUTUS [*urging them away*]

Hence! I will follow.

[CLITUS and VOLUMNIUS exit.]

Night hangs upon mine eyes. My bones would rest.

[He gently shakes STRATO, who wakes and stands up.]

tarry: wait

office: duty

vile conquest: despicable victory

I prithee, Strato, stay thou by thy lord.
Thy life hath had some smatch of honor in it.
Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,
While I do run upon it. Wilt thou, Strato?

STRATO

Give me your hand first.
[They clasp hands. BRUTUS gives STRATO his sword.]
Fare you well, my lord.

BRUTUS

Farewell, good Strato.
[He runs on his sword.]
Caesar, now be still.
I killed not thee with half so good a will.

*[He dies. STRATO kneels by him. Enter OCTAVIUS,
ANTONY, and soldiers.]*

OCTAVIUS

What man is that?

STRATO

My master, Brutus, who overcame himself,
And no man else hath honor by his death.

ANTONY

How died thy master, Strato?

STRATO

I held the sword, and he did run on it.

smatch: slight trace; a smattering

ANTONY

This was the noblest Roman of them all.
All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.
He only in a general honest thought
And common good to all made one of them.*
His life was gentle, and the elements**
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

OCTAVIUS

Within my tent his bones tonight shall lie,
Most like a soldier, ordered honorably.
So call the field to rest, and let's away
To part the glories of this happy day.

[All exit.]

[CITIZENS enter and directly address the audience. As they are speaking, all actors quietly enter and line up behind them.]

CITIZEN 1

And so ends Shakespeare's play. Octavius called it a "happy day"—what do you think?

CITIZEN 2

Well, it's a happy day for Octavius and Antony, who won the battle and then went on to share the leadership of Rome.

save: except

envy: jealousy; feelings of discontent over another person's success or advantages

* Antony says that all the conspirators except Brutus were jealous of Caesar, and that Brutus joined them with an honest belief that he was acting for the good of all Romans.

gentle: noble

** In ancient times, people thought there were four "elements"—earth, air, fire, and water—and each was associated with certain human characteristics and behaviors.

call the field to rest: order the army to stop fighting

part: share

CITIZEN 3

But only for a while. Before long, they were fighting against each other—and Octavius won.

CITIZEN 4

And so the Roman Republic came to an end, and the Roman Empire began, with Octavius as the first Roman emperor.

CITIZEN 5

The Senate gave Octavius a new name—Caesar Augustus—and the empire enjoyed many years of peace under his rule.

CITIZEN 6

But that is another story. And this is the end of our play.

[All bow as one.]

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