

THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR
By
William Shakespeare

Act I, Scene II



SCENE II. The same. A public place.

[Enter, in procession, with music, Caesar; Antony, for the course; Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, and Casca; a great crowd following, among them a Soothsayer.]

CAESAR.
Calpurnia,—

CASCA.
Peace, ho! Caesar speaks.

[Music ceases.]

CAESAR.
Calpurnia,—

CALPURNIA.
Here, my lord.

CAESAR.
Stand you directly in Antonius' way,
When he doth run his course.— Antonius,—

ANTONY.
Caesar, my lord?

CAESAR.
Forget not in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,
The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse.

ANTONY.

I shall remember.

When Caesar says “Do this,” it is perform’d.

CAESAR.

Set on; and leave no ceremony out.

[Music.]

SOOTHSAYER.

Caesar!

CAESAR.

Ha! Who calls?

CASCA.

Bid every noise be still.—Peace yet again!

[Music ceases.]

CAESAR.

Who is it in the press that calls on me?

I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,

Cry “Caesar”! Speak, Caesar is turn’d to hear.

SOOTHSAYER.

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.

Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

CAESAR.

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

SOOTHSAYER.

Beware the Ides of March.

CAESAR.

He is a dreamer; let us leave him. Pass.

[Sennet. Exeunt all but BRUTUS and CASSIUS.]

CASSIUS.

Will you go see the order of the course?

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.
Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires;
I'll leave you.

CASSIUS.

Brutus, I do observe you now of late:
I have not from your eyes that gentleness

And show of love as I was wont to have:
You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
Over your friend that loves you.

BRUTUS.

Cassius,
Be not deceived: if I have veil'd my look,
I turn the trouble of my countenance
Merely upon myself. Vexed I am
Of late with passions of some difference,
Conceptions only proper to myself,
Which give some soil perhaps to my behaviors;
But let not therefore my good friends be grieved—
Among which number, Cassius, be you one—
Nor construe any further my neglect,
Than that poor Brutus, with himself at war,
Forgets the shows of love to other men.

CASSIUS.

Then, Brutus, I have much mistook your passion;
By means whereof this breast of mine hath buried
Thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations.
Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

BRUTUS.

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

CASSIUS.

'Tis just:
And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your shadow. I have heard

Where many of the best respect in Rome,—
Except immortal Caesar!— speaking of Brutus,
And groaning underneath this age's yoke,
Have wish'd that noble Brutus had his eyes.

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.

Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear;
And 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.
And be not jealous on me, gentle Brutus;
Were I a common laughers, or did use
To stale with ordinary oaths my love
To every new protester; if you know
That I do fawn on men, and hug them hard
And after scandal them; or if you know
That I profess myself, in banqueting,
To all the rout, then hold me dangerous.

[Flourish and shout.]

BRUTUS.

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

CASSIUS.

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 wherefore do you hold me here so long?
What is it that you would impart to me?
If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honor in one eye and death i' the other
And I will look on both indifferently;
For 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,
As well as I do know your outward favor.
Well, honor is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
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:
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me, "Darest thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood
And swim to yonder point?" Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in,
And bade him follow: so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!
I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,

Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar: and this man
Is now become a god; and Cassius is
A wretched creature, and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain;
And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake:
His coward lips did from their color fly;
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his luster. I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius,"
As a sick girl.— Ye gods, it doth amaze me,
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world,
And bear the palm alone.

[Shout. Flourish.]

BRUTUS.

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

CASSIUS.

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.
“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;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with them,
“Brutus” will start a spirit as soon as “Caesar.”
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
When went there by an age since the great flood,
But it was famed with more than with one man?
When could they say, till now, that talk’d of Rome,
That her wide walls encompass’d but one man?
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
When there is in it but one only man.
O, you and I have heard our fathers say
There was a Brutus once that would have brook’d
Th’ eternal devil to keep his state in Rome,
As easily as a king!

BRUTUS.

That you do love me, I am nothing jealous;
What you would work me to, I have some aim:
How I have thought of this, and of these times,
I shall recount hereafter; for this present,
I would not, so with love I might entreat you,
Be any further moved. What you have said,
I will consider; what you have to say,
I will with patience hear; and find a time
Both meet to hear and answer such high things.
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.

The games are done, and Caesar is returning.

CASSIUS.

As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve;
And he will, after his sour fashion, tell you
What hath proceeded worthy note today.

[Re-enter Caesar and his Train.]

BRUTUS.

I will do so.— But, look you, Cassius,
The angry spot doth glow on Caesar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train:
Calpurnia's cheek is pale; and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being cross'd in conference by some senators.

CASSIUS.

Casca will tell us what the matter is.

CAESAR.

Antonius,—

ANTONY.

Caesar?

CAESAR.

Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights:
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 and well given.

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
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves;
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear, for always I am Caesar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.

[Exeunt Caesar and his Train. Casca stays.]

CASCA.

You pull'd me by the cloak; would you speak with me?

BRUTUS.

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

CASCA.

Why, you were with him, were you not?

BRUTUS.

I should not then ask Casca what had chanced.

CASCA.

Why, there was a crown offer'd him; and being offer'd him,
he put it by with the back of his hand, thus; 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?

CASCA.

Why, for that too.

BRUTUS.

Was the crown offer'd him thrice?

CASCA.

Ay, marry, was't, and he put it by thrice, every time gentler
than other; and at every putting-by mine honest neighbors
shouted.

CASSIUS.

Who offer'd him the crown?

CASCA.

Why, Antony.

BRUTUS.

Tell us the manner of it, gentle Casca.

CASCA.

I can as well be hang'd, as tell the manner of it: it was mere foolery; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown;—yet 'twas not a crown neither, 'twas one of these coronets;—and, as I told you, he put it by once: but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to him again: then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered it the third time; he put it the third time by; and still, as he refused it, the rabblement shouted, and clapp'd their chopt hands, and threw up their sweaty night-caps, and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Caesar refused the crown, that it had almost choked Caesar, for he swooned and fell down at it: and for mine own part, I durst not laugh for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air.

CASSIUS.

But, soft! I pray you. What, did Caesar swoon?

CASCA.

He fell down in the market-place, and foam'd at mouth, and was speechless.

BRUTUS.

'Tis very like: he hath the falling-sickness.

CASSIUS.

No, Caesar hath it not; but you, and I,
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.

CASCA.

I know not what you mean by that; but I am sure Caesar fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man.

BRUTUS.

What said he when he came unto himself?

CASCA.

Marry, before he fell down, when he perceived the common herd was glad he refused the crown, he pluck'd me ope his doublet, and offered them his throat to cut: an I had been a man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at a word, I would I might go to hell among the rogues: — and so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said any thing amiss, he desired their worships to think it was his infirmity. Three or four wenches where I stood cried, “Alas, good soul!” and forgave him with all their hearts. But there's no heed to be taken of them: if Caesar had stabb'd their mothers, they would have done no less.

BRUTUS.

And, after that he came, thus sad away?

CASCA.

Ay.

CASSIUS.

Did Cicero say any thing?

CASCA.

Ay, he spoke Greek.

CASSIUS.

To what effect?

CASCA.

Nay, an I tell you that, I'll ne'er look you i' the face again: but those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me. I could tell you more news too: Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images, are put to silence. Fare you well. There was more foolery yet, if could remember it.

CASSIUS.

Will you sup with me tonight, Casca?

CASCA.

No, I am promised forth.

CASSIUS.

Will you dine with me tomorrow?

CASCA.

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

CASSIUS.

Good; I will expect you.

CASCA.

Do so; farewell both.

[Exit CASCA.]

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,
However he puts on this tardy form.
This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
With better appetite.

BRUTUS.

And so it is. For this time I will leave you:
Tomorrow, if you please to speak with me,
I will come home to you; or, if you will,
Come home to me, and I will wait for you.

CASSIUS.

I will do so: till then, think of the world.—

[Exit Brutus.]

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,
Thy honorable metal may be wrought,
From that it is disposed: therefore 'tis meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus;
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humor me. 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.

[Exit.]