

Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare

TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE



ACT 1

— Scene 1 —

(A street in Rome. Flavius, Marullus, and certain commoners enter.)

FLAVIUS: Go home, you lazy men. Is this a holiday? Don't you know you can't walk around here doing nothing? You need a sign that tells your trade. Tell me, what is your job?

COMMONER 1: I am a carpenter, sir.

MARULLUS: Where are your tools? Why are you wearing your best clothes? And, you, what do you do?

COMMONER 2: I repair shoes, sir. I mend bad soles. If you are feeling bad, I can fix you.

MARULLUS: What do you mean by that?
Are you joking?

COMMONER 2: It's no joke, sir. I can
repair your shoes.

FLAVIUS: Why aren't you in your shop?
Why did you bring these men onto the
streets?

COMMONER 2: To wear out their shoes.
Then I'll get more work. Really, sir, we
came to join the party. Caesar has won
the battle.

MARULLUS: Why are you so happy?
What has he won? You have no common
sense! Don't you remember Pompey?
You often waited all day just to see him.
He was a great man. You shouted out with
joy when you saw him. And now you
celebrate his bloody death. Run home!
Fall on your knees! Pray that you will
not be punished.

FLAVIUS: Go! Gather all men who feel the same way you do. Go to the river and weep!

(All the commoners leave.)

See how they vanish. They feel guilty. You go that way toward the Capitol. I'll go this way. Take down any banners that honor Caesar.

MARULLUS: Can we do that? You know it's a feast day.

FLAVIUS: It doesn't matter. Take down the banners. I'll send the commoners home. You do the same. We need to stop Caesar before he becomes too powerful.

(Flavius and Marullus leave.)

— Scene 2 —

(A public place. The sound of trumpets. Caesar enters, followed by Antony, Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, and Casca. A crowd follows, among them a fortune-teller.)

CAESAR: Calpurnia!

CALPURNIA: I'm here.

CAESAR: Stand in Antony's way when he runs by. Antony! Touch Calpurnia as you race past her. Childless women who are touched in this holy race will be able to have children. The elders say so.

ANTONY: I will touch her. When Caesar says "Do this," it is done.

(Trumpets sound.)



FORTUNE-TELLER (*from the crowd*):
Caesar! Beware the Ides of March.

CAESAR: Who said that?

BRUTUS: A fortune-teller warns you to be
careful on March 15.

CAESAR: Let me see his face.

CASSIUS: You, come here!

FORTUNE-TELLER: Beware the Ides of March.

CAESAR: He's a dreamer. Let's get away from him.

(All but Brutus and Cassius leave.)

CASSIUS: Will you go watch the race?

BRUTUS: I'm not interested in sports. But don't let me stop you, Cassius. I'll leave, and you can watch.

CASSIUS: Brutus, you seem to want to stay away from me lately.

BRUTUS: No, Cassius. I've got a lot on my mind. Don't worry about me. I'm sorry. You are a great friend to me.

CASSIUS: I should have asked you sooner. Can you see the great person you are?

BRUTUS: Only by reflection.

CASSIUS: Then you can't see how important you are. I've heard many men talking. They say they wish Brutus would take Caesar's place.

BRUTUS: What dangers are you leading me into? You see something that's not in me.

CASSIUS: Brutus, you don't know how great you are. I'll show you things that you can't see about yourself.

(Trumpets and shouting from offstage.)

BRUTUS: What's all this shouting? I'm afraid the people want Caesar to be their king.

CASSIUS *(slyly)*: Oh, does that bother you? You wouldn't want him to be king?

BRUTUS: I love Caesar. But I wouldn't want him to be king. What do you want

to say to me? Is it noble? I'm not afraid to die. I love honor more than I love life.

CASSIUS: I know that. Honor is what I wanted to talk to you about. I would rather die than live under Caesar's rule.

Caesar is no better than you or me. I was born as free as Caesar. So were you. We can do anything he can do. One cold day, he dared me to jump into the freezing river with him. I did. He jumped in after me.

The river was wild. We fought it. Before we could get across, he started yelling, "Help me, Cassius! I'm sinking!" So I carried him to shore.

Now this man has become a god. I must now bow to him! He's a weak man. Once when he was sick, he cried out like a girl. He should not command the respect of the world. He should not be honored.

(Shouts and trumpets from offstage.)

BRUTUS: The crowd shouts again! They are calling for more honors for Caesar.

CASSIUS: He acts like he is a giant. We walk under his huge legs, like weak men. We must take our fate into our own hands. It's not destiny's fault that we are slaves. It's our fault. We must not be weak!

Why should Caesar's name be more honored than yours? Your name is as good as his. Why has Caesar grown so powerful? Since when has there only been one famous man in Rome? Can this truly be Rome if there is only one man in it?

BRUTUS: I know you're my friend. And I've already thought about these things. I'll think about what you've said. I'll listen to you. I'll let you know what I think. I do know one thing. If Caesar becomes king, I'm afraid of what it will do to Rome.