

Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare

TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE



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- INTRODUCTION -

It is 44 B.C. in Rome. Julius Caesar, an army general, has defeated a Roman aristocrat named Pompey in a fierce battle. A public celebration is being held as the play opens. But some of the noblemen who had supported Pompey are fearful of Caesar's growing popularity. They're afraid that the ambitious Caesar wants to be named king—which would mean the end of the great Roman Republic. To protect their own power, they begin to conspire against him.

- CAST OF CHARACTERS -

JULIUS CAESAR Roman statesman and army general

OCTAVIUS A Roman politician; later called Augustus
Caesar, first Emperor of Rome

MARK ANTONY A Roman politician, general, and
friend of Caesar

LEPIDUS A Roman politician

**MARCUS BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, LIGARIUS,
DECIOUS BRUTUS, METELLUS CIMBER, and CINNA** Plotters
against Caesar

CALPURNIA Caesar's wife

PORTIA Brutus's wife

CICERO, POPILIUS, and POPILIUS LENA Senators

FLAVIUS and **MARULLUS** Tribunes

CATO, LUCILIUS, TITINIUS, MESSALA, and VOLUMNIUS
Supporters of Brutus

ARTEMIDORUS A teacher of rhetoric

PUBLIUS An elderly gentleman

STRATO and **LUCIUS** Servants to Brutus

PINDARUS Servant to Cassius

THE GHOST OF CAESAR

A **SOOTHSAYER, a POET, SENATORS, CITIZENS, SOLDIERS,
COMMONERS, MESSENGERS, and SERVANTS**

ACT 1

| Scene 1 |

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

FLAVIUS: Go home, you idle creatures!
Is this a holiday? Don't you know you're
Not allowed to walk around on a workday
Without some sign of your profession?
Tell me, what is your trade?

COMMONER 1: Why, sir, I am a carpenter.

MARULLUS: Where are your tools?
Why are you wearing your best clothes?
And you, sir—what is your trade?

COMMONER 2: Sir, I am a cobbler.
I work with a clear conscience,
For I am, sir, a mender of bad soles.
If you are out of sorts, sir, I can mend you.

MARULLUS: What do you mean by that? Hmm.
Mend *me*, you saucy fellow?

COMMONER 2: Why, sir—repair your shoes.

FLAVIUS: Why aren't you in your shop? Why
do you lead these men about the streets?

COMMONER 2: To wear out their shoes, sir.

Then I'll get more work. But, indeed,
sir, we've taken a holiday to see Caesar
and to rejoice in his triumph.

MARULLUS: Why rejoice? What has he won?
What captives does he bring home?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than
senseless things!
Oh, you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome!
Do you not remember Pompey? Many a
Time you've climbed up walls and towers,
Your infants in your arms. There you've sat
All day long, waiting patiently to
See great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
And when you saw his chariot appear,
Didn't you shout so loud that the
River Tiber trembled under her banks
With the echo of your sounds?
And now you put on your best clothes?
You call out a holiday and
Lay flowers before him who comes
In triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees!
Beg the gods to stop the plague
That will surely punish you for such
ingratitude.

FLAVIUS: Go, go, good countrymen—and,
For this fault, gather all the men like you.
Draw them to the banks of the Tiber, and

Weep into the river until the
Lowest stream kisses the highest shores.

(All the commoners exit.)

See how they vanish, silent in their guilt.
You go down that way toward the Capitol.
I'll go this way. Remove any banners
You see that honor Caesar.

MARULLUS: May we do so?

You know it is the feast of Lupercal.

FLAVIUS: It doesn't matter. Let no statues
Be hung with Caesar's trophies. I'll drive
The commoners from the streets.
You do the same, where you see them thick.
We must pluck these feathers from
Caesar's wing before he can soar so high
We'll have even more to fear.

(Flavius and Marullus exit.)

| 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 soothsayer.)

CAESAR: Calpurnia!

CALPURNIA: Here, my lord.

CAESAR: Stand directly in Antony's way,
When he runs his course. Antony!
Do not forget to touch Calpurnia
As you race past her. The elders say that
Childless women, touched in this holy race
On the feast of Lupercal, will soon be able
To have children.

ANTONY: I shall remember.
When Caesar says "Do this," it is performed.

(Trumpets sound.)

SOOTHSAYER *(from the crowd):* Caesar!
Beware the ides of March.

CAESAR: Who said that?

BRUTUS: A soothsayer warns you to be careful
on March 15.

CAESAR: Let me see his face.

CASSIUS: Fellow, come out of the crowd!

CAESAR: Speak once again.

SOOTHSAYER: Beware the ides of March.

CAESAR: He is a dreamer. Let us leave him.

(All but Brutus and Cassius exit.)

CASSIUS: Will you go watch the race?

BRUTUS: I am not interested in games. I lack
That quick spirit that is in Antony.
But don't let me stop you, Cassius.
I'll leave, and you can watch.



CASSIUS: Brutus, I have noticed that
You seem to be avoiding me lately.

BRUTUS: No, Cassius. It's just that I've been
Concerned with some personal matters.
But do not let my good friends—of which,
Cassius, you are one—worry too much
about me.

My neglect of friends is only because
Poor Brutus is at war with himself.

CASSIUS: Then I have been mistaken.
I have kept my thoughts to myself.
Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

BRUTUS: No, for the eye does not see itself
Except by reflection in other things.

CASSIUS: It is very sad, Brutus,
That you have no mirrors to reveal
Your hidden worth to your own eyes.
I have heard many respected Romans,
Except immortal Caesar, praising you.
Groaning under these troubled times, they
Wish that noble Brutus had Caesar's eyes.

BRUTUS: Into what dangers would you lead me,
Cassius? Would you have me
Seek in myself that which is not there?

CASSIUS: Good Brutus,
Since you know you cannot see yourself
Except by reflection, let me be your mirror.
I will show you things about yourself
That you do not yet know.

(Trumpets and shouting from offstage.)

BRUTUS: What does this shouting mean?
I do fear the people are calling out for
Caesar to be their king.

CASSIUS *(slyly)*: Oh, do you fear it?
Then I must think you would not have it so.

BRUTUS: I would not—yet I love him well.
But why do you hold me here so long?
What is it that you want to say to me?
If it is not toward the general good,
Set honor in one eye and death in the other,
And I will look on both indifferently.

For let the gods be my witness that I love
The name of honor more than I fear death.

CASSIUS: I know that virtue to be in you,
as well as I know your face.

Well, honor is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
May think of this life—but, for my part,
I would rather not live than to stand
In awe of one no better than myself.
I was born as free as Caesar, and so were you.
We both have eaten as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.
Once, upon a raw and gusty day,
Caesar said to me, "Do you dare, Cassius,
To leap into the angry Tiber along with me
And swim across?" Upon the word,
Dressed as I was, I plunged in
And told him to follow. So indeed he did.
The wild river roared, and we fought it
With straining muscles and brave hearts.
But before we could get across,
Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"
So I carried the weary Caesar
From the waves of the Tiber. Now this man
has become a god—and Cassius is
A wretched creature who must bow
If Caesar carelessly nods at him!
He had a fever when he was in Spain, and
How he shook when the fit was upon him!