

JULIUS CAESAR

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JULIUS CAESAR

A Novelization by
CHRISTOPHER ANDREWS

Adapted from the play
The Tragedy of Julius Caesar
by
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Julius Caesar

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For my wife, editor, and Imzadi,
Yvonne Isaak-Andrews,
without whom these works would not exist.

For my mother,
Lynda Andrews,
whose adversity in understanding
Shakespeare inspired this journey.

And for my daughter,
Arianna Kristina Andrews,
hoping she'll find these books helpful
as she continues her scholastic career.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JULIUS CAESAR, Roman statesman and general

OCTAVIUS CAESAR

MARK ANTONY

MARCUS AEMILIUS LEPIDUS

}

} Triumvirs after Julius Caesar

}

CICERO

PUBLIUS

POPILIUS LENA

}

} Senators

}

MARCUS BRUTUS, Leader of the conspiracy against Julius Caesar

CAIUS CASSIUS

CASCA

TREBONIUS

CAIUS LIGARIUS

DECIUS BRUTUS

METELLUS CIMBER

CINNA

}

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} Conspirators against Julius Caesar

FLAVIUS and MURELLUS, Tribunes

ARTEMIDORUS of Cnidos, a Teacher of rhetoric

A SOOTHSAYER

CINNA, a Poet

Another POET

LUCILIUS

}

TITINIUS

}}

MESSALA

} Friends to Brutus and Cassius

}}

Young CATO

}

VOLUMNIUS

VARRUS

}

CLITUS

}}

CLAUDIO

}}}

} Servants to Brutus

STRATO

}}

LUCIUS

}

DARDANIUS

PINDARUS, Servant to Cassius

CALPHURNIA, Wife to Caesar

PORTIA, Wife to Brutus

COMMONERS or PLEBEIANS, SENATORS, GUARDS or SOLDIERS,
ATTENDANTS, etc.

LOCATIONS

ROME; encampment near SARDIS; plains near PHILIPPI

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Surrounded by reveling, screaming plebeians of the lowest order, Flavius and Murellus – two Tribunes of the Roman Republic – attempted to traverse the streets of Rome.

The dirty throng jumped about and cheered and wailed like raving lunatics, bewildering in their unwarranted gallivanting. One woman, her robes sagging away from her breasts in deplorable fashion, stumbled and actually latched onto Flavius' forearm for balance; the Tribune shook free of the commoner and raised his hand to strike her for her impertinence, but she danced her drunken self away before he could deliver just punishment.

By the gods, what was going on this day? What mayhem was this? The Feast of Lupercal was a pastoral festival to promote health and fertility, one of purification and expiation – *not* an excuse to indulge every crude whim or hedonistic impulse!

Flavius and Murellus exchanged a wordless communion of disgust and bewilderment at the whole state of affairs, then something caught Murellus' eye; his face twisted as he gestured. Flavius followed his gaze, and his own expression soured as though he had bitten into a too-ripe lemon.

Centered within the upcoming juncture of several streets rose a marble bust of Julius Caesar, that worrisome Roman statesman, general, and now *Dictator Perpetuo* – Dictator for Life – of the Roman Republic. As though “dictator for life” were somehow compatible with *any* “republic.”

Adding salt to the wound, said bust of Caesar had been decorated with wreath upon wreath of flowers, so many that the facsimile of his robes of office were buried from sight. And one wreath in particular

rested upon the head of the bust, looking for all the world like a royal crown.

The commoners caroused, but Flavius and Murellus seethed.

At that moment, a cluster of such commoners burst into an especially reprehensible round of laughter, accompanied by applause and more carrying about. One of them threw a skin of wine into the air, and all laughed harder still as the wasted ambrosia rained upon them.

Flavius could take no more.

Rushing forward, he forced himself amongst them, shouting, “Go hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home!”

The crowd regarded him, observed his robes of office, and appeared unimpressed.

“Is this a holiday?” Flavius demanded. “What, do you not know – being of the laboring class – that you ought not walk about upon a laboring day without the garb and tools of your profession?”

This prompted the plebeians to further laughter and rolling their collective eyes. A “laboring day,” did he say? By the gods, it was the Feast of Lupercal! Surely this Tribune of Rome spoke in jest.

Flavius singled out one man in particular. “Speak, what trade are you?”

The man chuckled, his gap-toothed grin as vacuous as his eyes; he appeared to feel this must be some game. “Why, sir, a carpenter.”

Murellus joined his fellow Tribune in challenging, “Where is your leather apron and your ruler? What are you doing with your best apparel on?”

The self-proclaimed carpenter continued chuckling as he glanced down at his nicest robes, but he looked a bit less certain of his circumstances.

Murellus turned upon another man. “You, sir, what trade are you?”

The shorter, bearded man smirked – a brazen expression that pleased neither Murellus nor Flavius in the slightest – and answered, “Truly, sir, in comparison with a fine workman, I am but, as you would say ... a cobbler.”

The man spoke as though making some sort of joke; was he speaking literally, or not? Frustrated, Murellus sneered, “But what *trade* are you? Answer me directly.”

The man maintained his insipid smirk, his eyes dancing about the faces of his companions as he said, “A trade, sir, that I hope I may use with a safe conscience, which is indeed, sir, a mender ... of bad *soles*.” He followed this with an audacious wink to the carpenter, which prompted further laughter from all but the two baffled Tribunes.

Damn it, had the fool meant “soles,” or “souls”? Was he incapable of plain and direct speech? Flavius clapped his hands before the bearded man’s face and demanded, “What *trade*, you knave? You naughty knave, what *trade*?”

But this “cobbler,” if that’s what he truly was, remained unimpressed by Flavius’ station and his anger. “No, I beseech you, sir, do not be out of temper with me.” The ornery twinkle in his eyes grew further as he stared pointedly down at Murellus’ feet. “Yet if you be out, sir, I can mend you.”

More laughter from the crowd, more offense taken by the Tribunes.

Murellus seized the bearded man’s arm. “What do you mean by that? ‘Mend me,’ you saucy fellow?”

The bearded man blinked down at the hand that held him, and his reply was a touch confused, as though he could not understand why Murellus did not appreciate his humor. “Why, sir, cobble you.”

Flavius snapped, “You *are* a cobbler, are you?”

The cobbler eased his arm out of Murellus’ grip, and his tone reclaimed some of its jovial attitude. “Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl. I meddle with no tradesman’s matters nor women’s matters, but *withal* ...” He grinned at the crowd over his pun on “with awl,” and everyone – save the two Tribunes – chuckled with appreciation. “... I am indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover them. As proper men as ever trod upon cowhide have walked upon my handiwork.”

Flavius returned, “But why are you not in your shop today? Why do you lead these men about the streets?”

The cobbler answered, “Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work.” The crowd regaled his wit with delight once more, then the bearded man decided to have mercy upon the flustered Tribunes. “But indeed, sir, we make holiday to see *Caesar*, and to rejoice in his triumph.”

The gathering cheered, but upon confirming that this obscene behavior truly had nothing to do with the Feast of Lupercal, the Tribunes stewed all the more.

In the Tribunes' eyes, this "triumph" of which the man spoke was cause for concern, not celebration. Julius Caesar's victory in Spain over the sons of Pompey – the former Triumvir along with Caesar himself and Crassus – was no great achievement for the Roman Republic, for it did not represent the defeat of any foreign adversaries, but those of *fellow Romans*. Why would this bring joy to any true Roman, this messy affair that reflected a dubious civil war more than an expansion of Rome's influence?

And these lowborn, hypocritical fools leaped upon this "triumph" as an excuse to abandon their shops and take to the streets!

Cutting through the lingering acclamations, Murellus vented, "Why 'rejoice'? What conquest does he bring home? What enslaved tributaries follow him to Rome, to grace his chariot wheels in captive bonds?"

The cobbler and carpenter and their fellow revelers looked at one another in uncertainty.

Murellus pressed on, voicing his disgust as he looked around and met each of their gazes. "You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! Oh, you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome, did you not know Pompey? Many times, and often, you have climbed up to walls and battlements, to towers and windows, yea, even to chimney tops, your infants in your arms, and have sat there the livelong day – with patient expectation – to see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome. And when you saw nothing but his chariot appear, have you not made such a universal shout that the river Tiber trembled underneath her banks to hear the echo of your sounds made in her concave shores?" He shook his head in disdain. "And do you now put on your best attire? And do you now cull out a 'holiday'? And do you now strew flowers in *his* way ...?" He flung an arm toward the decorated bust of Caesar. "... who comes in 'triumph' over Pompey's offspring?"

The crowd had lost their celebratory vigor under this scathing rebuke, their eyes dropping to the street beneath their feet.

"Be gone!" he commanded. "Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, pray to the gods to defer the plague that must light upon this

ingratitude.”

On this street, at least, the cheery mood was quashed. The cobbler and all the rest shuffled about and away, their countenances draped in defeat and shame as they withdrew from the Tribunes.

Flavius called after them, “Go, go, good countrymen, and for this fault assemble all the poor men of your sort, draw them to Tiber’s banks, and weep your tears into the channel, till the lowest streams do kiss the most exalted shores of all.”

The retreating throng glanced back at him, then continued without any retort or comment.

With some satisfaction, Flavius said to Murellus, “See how even their basest natures are affected; they vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness.”

Murellus grunted, sharing his gratification that even the rowdiest of the lot were slinking away as silent as the rest.

Flavius then said, “You go down that way towards the Capitol, I will go this way.” His lip curled in loathing as he again gazed upon the many petals that dressed the bust of Caesar, especially the one which rested crown-like upon the head. “Disrobe the images if you do find them decked with such ceremonial trappings.”

Murellus nodded, but also expressed some concern; chastising the rabble for their excesses was one thing, but ... “May we do so? You know it *is* the Feast of Lupercal.”

Flavius dismissed the notion with a wave of his hand. “It is no matter; let no images be hung with Caesar’s trophies.” With two strides, he approached the bust and ripped the crown-like wreath from its head. “I’ll go about and drive away the vulgar commoners from the streets; you do so, too, where you perceive them too thick. These growing feathers *plucked* from Caesar’s wing ...” He grabbed a handful of the wreaths from the bust’s neck and tore them free with equal vehemence. “... will make him fly an *ordinary* falcon’s flight, who would otherwise soar above the view of men and keep us all in servile fearfulness.”

Murellus again grunted his agreement. These adulations from the commoners for Caesar did not bode well. This was the Roman *Republic*, by the gods! The triumvirate of Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus had been too much power in too few hands as it was. But the pedestal upon which Caesar was now placed, this “dictator for life” they wished to honor him

... it was beyond the pale.

Shaking hands, the Tribunes of Rome parted ways.

PART ONE

CHAPTER TWO

Embracing with merry gusto the Feast of Lupercal, honored on the fifteenth of February, the crowds of proud, upper-class Romans surrounding the Capitol square elevated their celebration all the more for the presence of their beloved Julius Caesar. Trumpets flared, Roman centurions marched, commoners cast rose petals into the air and onto the streets of the square, all in praise of the Lupercalian rites, yes, but mostly in adoration of Caesar himself.

Behind the bannermen, trumpeters, and decorated soldiers, Caesar led the delegation, followed by Senators and Tribunes and other dignitaries, among them Casca, Marcus Brutus and his distant cousin Decius Brutus, Cicero, Caius Cassius ¹, and of course, Caesar's wife, Calphurnia – Calphurnia, for her part, waved to the crowds while speaking in close tones with Portia, wife of Marcus Brutus. And behind the lot of them slunk Flavius and Murellus, both of whom cast nervous eyes toward the soldiers who seemed to be shadowing them.

As the procession neared the group of runners who stripped down in preparation for the ceremonial course through the heart of Rome,

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Most historians believe that Caius Cassius' first name was, in fact, Gaius – his full given name "Gaius Cassius Longinus" – and yet, virtually all editions have Shakespeare naming him Caius, and the film and stage versions follow suit. It should be noted that "Gaius" was a very common first name in Ancient Rome, and "Caius" was an accepted variant spelling (an apparent reflection of early Roman confusion regarding the use of the Greek gamma – they used it for both the "g" and "k" sounds). Since Shakespeare chose to use this variant, I have kept him "Caius" in this work.

Caesar spied among them his good friend Mark Antony. Caesar smiled, halted his march, and called over his shoulder, “Calphurnia!”

Casca was quick to act, raising his hand and proclaiming to all around them, “Peace, ho! Caesar speaks.”

Within seconds, the trumpeters ceased their music, and the commoners quieted their cheers.

“Calphurnia!” Caesar called for his wife again.

Calphurnia hurried from Portia’s side to stand before her husband. “Here, my lord.”

Caesar smiled. “You should stand directly in Antony’s way when he does run his course.” He turned toward the runners and summoned, “Antony!”

Like Calphurnia, Antony presented himself posthaste. “Caesar, my lord?”

Caesar placed a hand upon his friend’s bare shoulder. “Do not forget in your speed, Antony, to touch Calphurnia.” He smiled at his wife once more, though there was some slight condescension about it. “For our elders say the barren – when touched in this holy chase – shake off their sterile curse.”

Calphurnia struggled to maintain a pleasant expression; many in Rome knew how much Caesar desired a biological heir to stand alongside his favored great-nephew, Octavius, and the burden fell to her (as his third wife, no less) to provide one – a burden which she had yet to fulfill. Still, she could not help but wish that Caesar had not made his request to Mark Antony so public.

For his part, Antony replied, “I shall remember. When Caesar says ‘Do this,’ it is performed.”

This bold proclamation prompted several Senators and Tribunes to exchange wary glances – subtle glances, to be sure, yet they spoke volumes.

But Caesar nodded his approval, both at the promise and the praise. “Set on, and leave no ceremony out.” He gave Antony an amiable shove, and Antony returned to the awaiting runners.

The festivities were warming once more, the procession getting back underway, when a harsh, piercing voice cried, “*Caesar!*”

Everyone hesitated, grumbling and looking around for the source of this terrible cry, one so unfitting for this time of celebration; many

revelers were unnerved by its desperate timbre, and found themselves uncertain as to how to react.

Caesar himself appeared more intrigued than concerned. “Ha? Who calls?”

Casca again declared, “Bid every noise be still; peace, yet again!”

When the crowd fell closer to silence, Caesar asked, “Who is it in the pressing throng that calls on me? I heard a tongue shriller than all the music cry, ‘Caesar!’ ” He offered an encouraging, benign smile. “Speak; Caesar is turned to hear.”

The voice came again, weaker this time but still audible due to the lessened commotion of the crowd. “Beware the ides of March.”

Caesar scanned the assembly. “What man is that?”

After a pregnant pause, it was Marcus Brutus who shouldered others aside, stood before someone too concealed for Caesar to see, then turned back and answered, “A soothsayer bids you ‘beware the ides of March.’ ”

Caesar’s brow furrowed; why should one such as he “beware” of the fifteenth of March? “Set him before me. Let me see his face.”

Cassius stepped forward from his cluster of Senators to call, “Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.”

Near Brutus, the crowd parted. A decrepit figure limped forward; his visage made one shudder at its heavy decay, like a man who had partaken of far too much wine and ended up with one foot already in the grave. He peered at Caesar with his single good eye, the other drifting too high and outward.

And in that eye, Caesar thought he saw something like adoration and devotion; he did not recoil from the unseemly fellow, but asked, “What do you say to me now? Speak once again.”

When the dilapidated man responded, his voice was so strained and creaky, it was a wonder his initial cries had penetrated the ovations. With earnest sincerity, he rasped to Caesar, “Beware the ides of March.”

Caesar met that gentle eye and pondered this warning ... but, in the end, he took on a kind yet patronizing smile and declared for those around him, “He is a dreamer. Let us leave him.” He then raised his hand high and waved the procession onward. “Pass!”

The soothsayer reached out to Caesar, as though to touch his robes and implore him to listen further, but the looming presence of the

nearest soldiers dissuaded him; the dilapidated man sagged, and even as the trumpets sounded once more and the cortège continued along its way, he disappeared back into the crowd.

But it was not only the soothsayer who broke away from the delegation. Cassius stepped back, allowing others to pass him as he maintained a fixed, neutral expression. For he had noticed Brutus – brother to Cassius’ wife, Junia – making his own way apart from the celebrations and along a relatively quiet street. Cassius hesitated only a brief moment before pursuing his brother-in-law.

As they left the greatest din behind them, Cassius called to Brutus, “Will you go see the order of the race’s course?”

Brutus glanced over his shoulder in mild surprise at having been addressed. He shook his head and replied, “Not I.”

Cassius offered a meager gesture back the way from which they had come. “I pray you, do.”

Brutus smiled and shook his head again. “I am not gamesome. I do lack some part of that lively spirit that is in Mark Antony.” He echoed Cassius’ own gesture toward the center of celebration. “Do not let me hinder your desires, Cassius. I’ll leave you.” He continued along his way.

Cassius blinked at the rather abrupt dismissal. But he paused a mere handful of heartbeats before hurrying after him. “Brutus ...”

Brutus halted again and turned back, his expression mild but expectant.

Cassius considered his words before speaking, “I have observed you of late. I have not seen, from your eyes, that same gentleness and show of love as I was wont to have.” He placed his hand upon his own chest. “You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand over your friend who loves you.”

Brutus winced at this revelation, then offered another, gentler smile of warmth. “Cassius, do not be misled. If I have veiled my expression, I turn the trouble of my countenance merely upon *myself*. I am vexed of late with conflicted passions – conceptions only relating *to* myself, which give some stain, perhaps, to my behaviors.” He offered Cassius a light touch upon his shoulder. “But therefore do not let my good friends be grieved – among which number, Cassius, you be one – nor construe any further my neglect than that poor Brutus, at war with himself, forgets the shows of love to other men.”

A third time Brutus attempted to continue on his way, away from the revelries behind them, but this time Cassius did not allow him to take more than a single step before trailing after him. "Then, Brutus, I have much mistook your passion, because of which this breast of mine has buried thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations." He hurried several long strides so that he could halt in front of Brutus and ask, "Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?"

Brutus paused, cocking his head to one side. "No, Cassius, for the eye sees not *itself*, except by reflection from other things."

A shrewd expression crossed Cassius' face as he nodded. "It is true. 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 reflection." When Brutus offered no response beyond a raised eyebrow, Cassius pressed onward. "I have heard where many of those with the best standing in Rome ... the best, except for immortal Caesar ... speaking of Brutus, and groaning underneath this era's yoke, have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes."

Brutus regarded Cassius with his own acumen, and, in spite of the continuing commotions of revelry behind them, lowered his voice. "Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius, that you would have me seek into myself for that which is not *in* me?"

"As to that, good Brutus," Cassius retorted, "be prepared to hear. And since you know you cannot see yourself so well as by reflection ... *I*, your looking glass, will modestly discover to yourself that *of* yourself which you yet know not of." He held up a forestalling hand as Brutus made to protest. "And do not be suspicious of me, gentle Brutus: Were I a common jester, or did cheapen my love with frequent oaths to every new professor of friendship; if you know that I do fawn on men and hug them hard, then afterward defame them; or if you know that I profess friendship in drunken banqueting to all the mob ... *then* consider me dangerous."

Brutus opened his mouth to respond, but at that moment, the trumpeters from the festival's procession loosed their loudest song yet. And though the delegation had left them far behind, neither Brutus nor Cassius could dismiss the exultant shouting of the distant crowds that followed an instant later.

Even as the echoes lingered, Brutus shook his head and said,

almost to himself, “What does this shouting mean? I do fear the people choose Caesar for their *king*.”

Cassius studied him. “Aye, do you fear it? Then I must think you would not have it so.”

“I would *not*, Cassius ... yet I love him well.” Brutus heaved a wearisome sigh; then he snapped his attention back to Cassius – who still stood in his way – demanding, “But why do you hold me here so long? What is it that you would impart to me?” When Cassius held his ground, yet appeared hesitant to speak further, Brutus assured him, “If it be, in any respect, toward the general good, then set honor in one eye and death in the other, and I will look on both impartially – for let the gods so favor me, as I love the name of honor more than I fear death.”

Cassius, looking pleased, nodded at this. Clasping his hands to the front of his robes, he said, “I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus, as well as I do know your outward appearance. Well, honor *is* the subject of my story ...”

As he spoke, Cassius drifted toward a nearby marble bench which waited upon this quiet street for citizens to settle and rest as desired. He gestured for Brutus to join him.

“I cannot tell what you and other men think of this life,” Cassius continued, “but, for my single self, I desire not to live in awe of such a thing as common as I myself. I was born as free as Caesar, and 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 river Tiber chafing against her shores, Caesar said to me, ‘Do you dare, Cassius, now leap with me into this angry flood and swim to yonder point?’ Upon the word, clothed as I was, I plunged in and bade him follow; so indeed, he did. The torrent roared, and we did buffet it with lusty sinews, throwing it aside and stemming it with hearts of competition. But before we could arrive at the proposed point, Caesar cried, ‘Help me, Cassius, or I sink!’ And I – as Aeneas, our great ancestor, did bear upon his shoulder his father, the old Anchises, from the flames of Troy – so from the waves of Tiber I did bear the tired Caesar.” Cassius shook his head in disgust, and scoffed in a lower voice, “And *this* man has now become a god, and Cassius is a wretched creature and must bend his body if

Caesar carelessly nods to him.”

Cassius paused as another heightened cry echoed through the streets of Rome. He and Brutus exchanged an anxious look as the uproar peaked, then fell. When finally the noise returned to the general hubbub of city life, Cassius continued.

“Caesar had a fever when he was in Spain,” he shared (in a taletelling tone that did not sit altogether well with Brutus), “and when the fit was on him, I did mark how he did shake – it is true, this ‘god’ did shake. His lips fled their healthy hue as cowardly soldiers might fly from the color of their own flags, and that same eye ... whose glance *awes* the world ... did lose its luster. I did hear him groan. Aye, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans mark him and write his speeches in their books, ‘Alas!’ it cried, as a sick girl, ‘give me some drink, Titinius!’”

This time, Cassius shook his head with such vehemence, Brutus would not have been surprised if he had spat upon the ground.

“You gods,” Cassius growled with a glance flicked toward the heavens, “it does amaze me that a man of such a feeble constitution should so outstrip the majestic world, and bear the palm of victory *alone*.”

The two men perked up as the city echoed yet again with cries of rabble joy, followed by another flourish of trumpets.

“Another general shout!” Brutus proclaimed, his brow furrowing. “I do believe that these applauses are for some new honors that are heaped on Caesar.”

Cassius sneered, “Why, man, he does bstride the narrow world – like the giant Colossus did bstride the harbor of Greece’s Rhodes – 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.” He stood, as though to walk away, but instead locked eyes with Brutus. “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in *ourselves*, that we are underlings. ‘Brutus’ and ‘Caesar’: What should be in that name, ‘Caesar’? Why should that name be voiced more than yours? Write them together, yours is as fair a name; speak them, it does flatter the mouth as well; weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with them, ‘Brutus’ will raise a spirit as soon as ‘Caesar.’”

This time Cassius did walk away, but it was only to begin pacing

to and fro, casting his eye in the direction of the repeated shouts and flourishes, and it was clear that the man struggled to keep his voice level in his acrimony.

“Now,” he continued, “in the names of all the gods at once, upon what meat does this – our Caesar – feed that he is grown so great? Era, you are shamed! Rome, you have lost the breeding of noble bloods! When was there ever an age – since the great flood of Deucalion – that was famous for no more than with *one* man? When could they who talked of Rome say – till now – that her wide walks encompassed but *one* man? Now is it Rome indeed ... and room enough ... when there is in it but only *one* man.”

Brutus noted that Cassius had stressed the similar pronunciation between “Rome” and “room” here, merging them into a spiteful play on words. Before he could give it further thought, Cassius whirled and returned to the bench, again piercing Brutus with his passionate gaze.

“Oh,” he continued, “you and I have heard our fathers say there was a Brutus once – Lucius Junius Brutus, your very ancestor who expelled the Tarquins to establish our great Republic – who would have tolerated the eternal *devil* to keep his throne in Rome ...” He sneered toward the departed procession once more. “... as easily as a *king*.”

Cassius appeared to have finally lost his momentum, and Brutus drew a long, deliberate breath, considering his words with care before responding.

“That you do love me,” he told Cassius, “I am not at all doubtful. What you would *work me* to ... I have some idea. How I have thought of this – and of these times – I shall recount hereafter.”

Cassius leaned forward, making as though to speak further, but Brutus forestalled him with a gentle but firm hand.

“For this present,” he continued, “I would not be any further persuaded– so, with love, I ask you to halt. What you have said I will consider; what you have yet to say I will, with patience, hear, and find a proper time both to hear and to answer such high things. Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this ...” It was his turn to lock eyes with his companion, and to fill his words with heartfelt intensity. “Brutus would rather be a common villager than to repute himself a son of Rome under these hard conditions, as this time is likely to lay upon us.”

Something flickered in Cassius’ face, in his eyes – something

quick, and perhaps furtive. Then his countenance relaxed, and he appeared both pleased and relieved. "I am glad that my weak words have struck at least this much show of fire from Brutus."

Yet another commotion arose throughout the city, but this one lingered, the calls and trumpets yielding to extended applause. Soon, the rumblings pulled into focus, concentrating more toward the main thoroughfare from which the two men had come.

Brutus swallowed a sigh. "The games are done, and Caesar is returning." With a gesture for Cassius to follow, he stood from the bench and led the way back toward the source of their shared angst. It soon grew clear that the throng of commoners were forming a virtual wall through which they would not easily pass, even with their robes of office. Instead, Brutus guided Cassius to one side, so that they might climb a high stoop before a closed shop. From there, they could observe, over the heads of the fawning citizens, the approaching Caesar and his servile retinue; the soldiers cleared a path before their *Dictator Perpetuo*, keeping the citizens' outstretched hands at bay and leaving the way all the more visible.

Cassius leaned closer to Brutus' ear and murmured, "As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve, and he will – after his sour fashion – tell you what has proceeded worthy of note today."

Brutus nodded in distracted fashion. "I will do so. But look you, Cassius ..." He inclined his head toward the approaching Caesar, who, Brutus observed, scowled as he leaned his left arm on the shoulder of a sweaty, downtrodden Antony. "The angry spot does glow on Caesar's brow, and all the rest look like a scolded train – Calphurnia's cheek is pale, and Cicero looks with such ferret-like and fiery eyes as we have seen him in the Capitol, being crossed in debate by some Senators."

Cassius nodded his agreement and repeated with confidence, "Casca will tell us what the matter is." And, leading Brutus from the stoop, they descended and shouldered their way into the crowd, attempting to intercept Casca before he passed by ...

Caesar, preoccupied though he might have been, noticed Cassius' movements, and inclined his head toward his younger friend. "Antony!" he snapped.

Antony straightened. "Caesar."

Caesar regarded him, and his expression softened as he spoke for

Antony's ears only. "Let me have men about me who are fat; smoothforeheaded men and such as sleep at night." He raised his eyebrows in a particular direction; Antony glanced with subtlety to spy who Caesar was indicating. "Yonder Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous."

Antony dismissed the Senator, who shuffled through the crowd. "Do not fear him, Caesar; he's not dangerous. He is a noble Roman, and well disposed."

Caesar grumbled, "I wish he were fatter! But I do not fear him. Yet ... if I *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 right through the deeds of men. He loves no plays, as you do, Antony; he hears no music; seldom he smiles – and then he smiles in such a sort as if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit that could be moved to smile at anything." Caesar grunted in distaste. "Such men as he are never at heart's ease while they behold a greater personage than themselves, and therefore they are very dangerous. I rather tell you what is to *be* feared than what *I* fear; for always *I* am Caesar." Then he offered Antony a warm smile. "Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf, and tell me – truly – what you think of him."

And, as Antony switched from Caesar's left side to his right, the trumpets played on and the retinue continued along its way. All save Casca, who lingered behind when he felt Brutus' hand upon him ...

As Brutus extracted Casca from the procession, Casca observed with some wry amusement, "You pulled me by the cloak. Would you speak with me?"

"Aye, Casca," Brutus answered him, "tell us what has occurred today that Caesar looks so serious."

Casca raised an eyebrow. "Why, you were with him, were you not?"

Brutus raised his own eyebrow and smiled in return. "Then I should not ask Casca what had occurred."

Casca chuckled and nodded his acceptance of this fair point. Then he explained, "Why, there was a *crown* offered to Caesar; and, being offered to him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus ..." Casca pantomimed brushing something away, like a citizen declining an unsavory goblet of wine. "... and then the people fell a-shouting."

Brutus noted that Casca said “people” with distaste. “What was the second noise for?”

Casca shrugged, repeating a half-hearted encore of his brushing-away gesture. “Why, for that, too.”

Cassius spoke, “They shouted thrice. What was the last cry for?”

Casca shrugged again. “Why, for that, too.”

Brutus clarified, “Was the crown offered him *thrice*?”

Casca nodded, his expression sour. “Aye, indeed it was, and he put it by thrice, every time gentler than the other; and at every putting-by, my honest neighbors shouted.”

Cassius demanded, “Who offered him the crown?”

“Why,” Casca said, as though the answer should be obvious, “Antony.”

Cassius tensed, his jaws clenching in antipathy, but Brutus placed a calming hand upon his arm and said, “Tell us the manner of it, noble Casca.”

Casca waved his hand and scoffed, “I can as well be hanged as tell the ‘manner’ of it. It was mere foolery; I did not mark it.” But when he saw that neither Brutus nor Cassius were going to let him dismiss them so easily, he acquiesced. “I saw Mark Antony offer Caesar a crown – yet it was not a crown, neither; it was one of these garland coronets of a Lupercal runner – and, as I told you, Caesar put it by once; but for all that, to my thinking, he would willingly have had it. Then Antony 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 Antony offered it the third time; he put it the third time by; and each time as he refused it ...” Casca’s faced contracted in disgust. “...the rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands, and threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Caesar refused the crown that it had almost *choked* Caesar, for he fainted and fell down at it.” His sickened lips puckered further. “And for my own part, I dared not laugh for fear of opening *my* lips and receiving the bad air.”

Casca expected his disdainful commentary on the commoners to invoke humor from his audience of two, but Cassius fixated elsewhere. “But wait, I pray you: What, did Caesar *faint*?”

Casca nodded. “He fell down in the marketplace and foamed at the mouth and was speechless.”

Brutus offered his own knowing nod. “It is very likely; he has the ‘falling sickness’ – epilepsy.”

Cassius scowled, again appearing as though he desired to spit upon the ground. “No, Caesar does not have it. But you and I and honest Casca, *we* have the *falling* sickness.”

Casca, having missed Cassius’ earlier diatribe against Caesar’s rise to power, said only, “I do not know what you mean by that, but I am sure Caesar fell down. If the common people did not clap him and hiss him, accordingly as he pleased and *displeased* them – as they used to do the actors in the theatre – then I am no honest man.”

Brutus asked, “What did he say when he came to himself?”

Casca elaborated, “Indeed, before he fell down, when he perceived the common herd was glad he refused the crown, he plucked open his doublet and offered them his throat to cut.” He smirked as he recalled the absurdity of it. “If *I* had been a working man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at his word ... I imagine I might go to hell among the rogues.” He shrugged. “And so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said anything 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.” He sneered, “But there’s no heed to be taken of *them*; if Caesar had stabbed their mothers, they would have done no less.”

“And after that,” Brutus clarified, “he came away, looking serious?”

“Aye.”

Recalling their fellow statesman’s fiery eyes, Cassius asked, “Did Cicero say anything?”

“Aye, he spoke Greek.”

“To what effect?”

Casca smirked. “Nay, if I tell you that, I’ll never look you in the face again. Those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but for *my* own part ...” His smirk broadened into a smile. “... it was Greek to me.”

Again, neither Brutus nor Cassius were in the mood to receive his humor. Upon seeing this, Casca grew serious once more. He leaned in toward the men, speaking lower than he had before.

“I could tell you more news, too,” he told them. “Murellus and

Flavius – for pulling decorations off Caesar’s statues – have been put to silence.”

Brutus and Cassius locked eyes. Two Tribunes of Rome, punished with dismissal over such a minor discourtesy! It stood as a solid example of every concern they had discussed this day.

Having nothing else to share, Casca stepped back and said to both, “Fare you well. There was more foolery yet, if I could remember it.”

Cassius nodded in shared abhorrence. He then asked, “Will you have supper with me tonight, Casca?”

“No,” Casca stated, “I have a prior engagement.”

Cassius tried again, “Will you dine with me tomorrow?”

Casca thought about it. “Aye, if I am alive, and your mind solid, and your dinner worth the eating.”

Brutus thought this a rather rude reply to Cassius’ kind invitation, yet Cassius appeared to think little of it. “Good. I will expect you.”

“Do so,” Casca said, then offered a short wave. “Farewell, both.” And then the man was on his way.

Brutus shook his head and commented, “What a blunt fellow this man has grown to be! He was high-spirited when he went to school.”

Cassius retorted, “So is he now in execution of any bold or noble enterprise, notwithstanding that he puts on this sluggish form. This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit, which gives men stomach to digest his words with better appetite.”

Brutus wasn’t sure of all that, but he had no desire to debate the matter, so he simply said, “And so it is.” He then took a step away to follow after Casca’s example. “For this time, I will leave you. Tomorrow – if you please to speak with me – I will come to your home; or, if you prefer, come to my home, and I will wait for you.”

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

Brutus nodded and went on his way ... and Cassius stared after him.

Well, Brutus, you are noble. Yet I see your honorable mettle may be molded from that to which it is disposed – therefore, it is appropriate that ‘noble’ minds keep ever with those like-minded; for who is so firm that they cannot be seduced?

Caesar does bear a grudge against me, but he loves Brutus. If I

were Brutus now and he were Cassius, Brutus would not persuade me.

This night I will throw writings in his windows – in several handwritings, as if they came from several citizens – all sharing the great opinion that Rome holds of his name; wherein, obscurely, Caesar's ambition shall be glanced at. And after this ...

Let Caesar seat himself sure, for we will shake him ... or worse days shall endure.

JULIUS CAESAR

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHRISTOPHER ANDREWS lives in California with his wife, Yvonne Isaak-Andrews, and their wonderful daughter, Arianna. In addition to his duties as stay-at-home Dad, he is always working on his next novels, and continues to work as an actor and screenwriter.

Excerpts from all of Christopher's novels can be found at www.ChristopherAndrews.com.