



JULIUS CAESAR – A Potted Shakespeare

by Daniel Webster

EXCERPT

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THE POTTED SHAKESPEARE - JULIUS CAESAR

Adapted by Daniel Webster

CHARACTERS

JULIUS CAESAR

CASSIUS

BRUTUS

MARK ANTONY

CALPURNIA

CASCA

METELLUS

TREBONIUS

DECIUS

SOOTHSAYER

OCTAVIAN

STRATO

A MESSENGER

GUARDS

A PUBLIC PLACE IN ROME

A podium takes centre stage with steps up to it.

A trumpet fanfare – surrounded by others, JULIUS CAESAR takes his place on the podium, waving to the cheering crowds. Also there are MARK ANTONY, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, & CALPURNIA & OTHERS

CAESAR People of Rome. I stand before you in victory. A hard-fought, arduous and bloody war has come to an end and I have emerged victorious.

We can now face a time of peace and prosperity with every citizen of Rome able to look upon me with pride in their hearts and forever with joyful memories of being able to celebrate on this day.

I thank you all for your loyalty and support. Together we will make Rome even greater than it has been before.

Loud cheers

To Calpurnia, I thank you for your love and for being the most loyal wife a man could wish for.

For now, return to your homes. Celebrate. Toast my victory!

More loud cheers as CAESAR turns to CALPURNIA

Come, Calpurnia. Let us celebrate too.

They start to leave

CALPURNIA Of course, Caesar

CAESAR **(turning to MARK ANTONY)** What do you think Mark Antony? The people are happy at last are they not?

MARK So it would seem my Lord. Your victory has brought Rome together.

CAESAR Yes, yes, it has. Hasn't it?

An elderly SOOTHSAYER pushes his way towards CAESAR

SOOTHSAYER Beware the Ides of March.

CAESAR Who is this fool?

MARK Get away old man.

SOOTHSAYER I say it again great Caesar. Beware the Ides of March.

CAESAR What is he blithering about?

CALPURNIA The Ides of March are the 15th day of that month.

CAESAR I know that, you silly woman. Get rid of him. Guards!

Two GUARDS appear

SOOTHSAYER Great Caesar, respect my knowledge. You face great danger. The Ides of March are nearly here. Beware.

CAESAR Idiot. Take him away

The GUARDS remove the SOOTHSAYER

SOOTHSAYER *(as he is lead away)* I repeat. Beware!

CAESAR Never heard such nonsense

MARK The man is demented sadly Caesar.

CAESAR Obviously.

CALPURNIA He may not be Caesar.

CAESAR Of course he is. Complete lunatic. Needs locking up.

MARK He is safely out of the way now Caesar. Don't let a madman spoil your triumph.

CAESAR I certainly won't. Come let us drink and enjoy this moment.

CAESAR leads CALPURNIA, MARK ANTONY & OTHERS away. BRUTUS and CASSIUS hang back

CASSIUS There he goes. Not a care in the world. Anyone would think he had achieved the victory single-handed. No mention of the many brave men we have lost or the leadership of the generals. No, they don't get a look-in. *His* victory. He makes me sick.

BRUTUS Take it easy my friend, he did play a fairly important part in it.

CASSIUS I'm not underestimating it, but he doesn't give credit to anyone else – as usual.

BRUTUS You have a point.

CASSIUS We aren't the only ones to recognise this. Matters have been brewing for some months. The danger is that he will let all this adulation go to his head. There is talk in the senate of making him King. King!

BRUTUS Yes, I was aware of that. I agree it's a step too far.

CASSIUS It's what he wants and what he will get if no one stops the nobles from setting him on an even higher pedestal. Someone must act.

BRUTUS What are you suggesting?

CASSIUS For the sake of Rome. For the sake of us all. If these matters proceed, as I believe they will, then Caesar will become a dictator. Rome will be at his mercy. We all will.

BRUTUS Whatever you are considering, I believe we must be cautious.

CASSIUS But, don't you see, the Senate wants these powers to be bestowed on him now. He must be removed.

BRUTUS Temporarily?

CASSIUS *(he clutches at his dagger)* Permanently.

BRUTUS I see. Then we would be best to talk with those who are like-minded. As soon as possible.

CASSIUS I agree. Can we meet tonight?

BRUTUS Come to my house after dark. We can talk in the garden. My wife, Portia, is visiting relatives. It will be quiet and private.

CASSIUS I will bring the others at 10.

CASSIUS leaves

BRUTUS Oh Caesar, my friend. Please heed the warnings you are given. Don't let your arrogance lead you to disaster.

A GARDEN – NIGHT

CASSIUS enters with CASCA, DECIUS, METELLUS & TREBONIUS

CASSIUS Brutus will meet us here. Keep as quiet as possible. Spies are everywhere and all of us have enemies. Enemies who are looking for reasons to bring us down.

METELLUS Then let us make this meeting quick and to the point.

BRUTUS enters

BRUTUS I do apologise for being late. I wanted to make sure my staff were well out of the way.

DECIUS We don't have much time Brutus.

TREBONIUS Let's get on with it. I don't feel safe here.

BRUTUS We are fine. Look, tomorrow we know that Caesar will be at the Senate. We should observe his behaviour closely. We need to test him, before we act.

CASSIUS How?

BRUTUS Metellus, your brother is facing banishment and exile isn't he?

METELLUS On trumped up charges, yes he is.

BRUTUS Use Caesar's appearance to appeal to him. Ask him to intercede on your brother's behalf. Ask for mercy.

CASCA He will never do that.

BRUTUS Whether he does or doesn't isn't the point – sorry Metellus – but in his current mood, which is so positive, he may be feeling sympathetic; lenient.

METELLUS Fat chance.

BRUTUS We will see.

TREBONIUS So what happens if he ignores the pleas? For ages now he has been unwilling to compromise because it dents his pride.

BRUTUS In that case I fear we will be left with no alternative. His values will no longer be ours. We will have to take him out.

METELLUS What about Mark Antony? He and Caesar are almost joined at the hip. If you get rid of one, you'll have to dispose of the other.

BRUTUS Now, hold on.

CASSIUS He has a point. They are close. Mark Antony is Caesar's unofficial heir.
He wields great powers of his own.

TREBONIUS He's right Brutus.

BRUTUS If we kill Mark Antony it will completely negate the reason for our
move against Caesar. Caesar's ambition is getting out of hand and he
is putting our liberty and the future of Rome at stake. Mark Antony
loves Rome. We can only hope that he will understand our actions
and motives in time.

DECIUS You are right Brutus, we can't kill off everyone who loves Caesar.

CASCA Restraint would be advisable.

CASSIUS As you wish then Brutus. Trebonius?

TREBONIUS Ok. I agree. Just Caesar.

BRUTUS Alright. So, we follow what I said. Ok Metellus?

METELLUS Sure.

BRUTUS Watch, observe and act.

CASSIUS Sharpen your knives.

BRUTUS Now go. Tomorrow at noon.

They all leave

