

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Contents

Introduction	v
Characters	x
Act One	2
Act Two	46
Act Three	90
Act Four	138
Act Five	174
Glossary	206

Introduction

This volume of William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* consists of two versions of the play. The first is the original, based on the *Globe* edition of 1860, which was in turn based on the Folio of 1623. The second version is a translation of the original into contemporary English. In both versions spelling and punctuation have been updated, and the names of the characters have been spelled out in full for easier reading. Insights from modern scholars have been included in both versions.

The translation of *Julius Caesar* is not meant to take the place of the original. Instead, it is an alternative to the notes usually included in modern editions. In many editions these notes interfere with the reading of the play. Whether alongside or below the original text, the notes break the rhythm of reading and frequently force the reader to turn back to an earlier page or jump ahead to a later one. Having a translation that runs parallel to the original, line for line, allows the reader to move easily from Elizabethan to contemporary English and back again. It's simply a better way to introduce Shakespeare.

Also, this translation is suitable for performance, where notes are not available to the audience. Admittedly, a well-directed and well-acted production can do much to clarify Shakespeare's language. And yet, there will be numerous references and lines whose meanings are not accessible on a first hearing to many. What, for instance, does Caesar mean when he asks Casca, "Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?"

Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare's language does present problems for modern readers. After all, more than four centuries separate us from him. During this time words have acquired new meanings or have dropped from the language altogether, and sentence structures have become less fluid. But these are solvable problems.

Act One

Scene 1 [*A street in Rome.*] *Enter* FLAVIUS, MARULLUS, *and* CERTAIN
CITIZENS

FLAVIUS Hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home.

Is this a holiday? What, know you not,

Being mechanical, you ought not walk

Upon a laboring day without the sign

Of your profession? Speak, what trade art thou? 5

FIRST CITIZEN Why, sir, a carpenter.

MARULLUS Where is thy leather apron and thy rule?

What dost thou with thy best apparel on?

You, sir, what trade are you?

SECOND CITIZEN Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, 10
as you would say, a cobbler.

MARULLUS But what trade are thou? Answer me directly.

SECOND CITIZEN A trade, sir, that I hope I may use with a safe
conscience; which is indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

MARULLUS What trade, thou knave? Thou naughty nave, 15
what trade?

SECOND CITIZEN Nay, sir, I beseech you, be not out with me; yet
if you be out, sir, I can mend you.

MARULLUS What meanest thou by that? Mend me, thou saucy fellow?

SECOND CITIZEN Why, sir, cobble you. 20

FLAVIUS Thou are a cobbler, art thou?

SECOND CITIZEN Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl. I meddle
with no tradesman's matters, nor women's matters; but withal 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 neat's leather have 25

Act One

Scene 1 [*A street in Rome.*] Enter FLAVIUS, MARULLUS, and CERTAIN
CITIZENS

FLAVIUS Now, go home, you idle creatures, go home.

What is this, a holiday? Don't you know

That workers should wear working clothes

In the street on a weekday? You there,

Tell me, what is your trade? 5

FIRST CITIZEN Me, sir? Why I'm a carpenter.

MARULLUS Then where is your leather apron and your ruler?

What are you doing with your best clothes on?

You, sir, what is your trade?

SECOND CITIZEN Actually, sir, compared to a real tradesman, I just, 10
as you would say, fix things.

MARULLUS But what is your trade? Answer me plainly.

SECOND CITIZEN A trade, sir, that I can practice with a clear
conscience. I am, indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

MARULLUS What trade, you worthless clod? Fool, what is 15
your trade?

SECOND CITIZEN Please, I ask you, sir, don't be out of sorts. But
if you are, sir, I can fix that too.

MARULLUS What do you mean by that? Fix what, you uppity fellow?

SECOND CITIZEN Why, sir, I can cobble you. 20

FLAVIUS You are a cobbler, are you?

SECOND CITIZEN Truly, sir, all my living is based on the awl. I
don't meddle in tradesmen's affairs, nor in affairs with women,
but, after all, I am a surgeon of shoes. When their lives are in danger,
I save them. As good a man who ever walked on shoe leather 25

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

gone upon my handiwork.

FLAVIUS But wherefore art thou not in thy shop today?

Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

SECOND CITIZEN Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get
myself into more work. But indeed, sir, we make holiday 30
to see Caesar, and to rejoice in his triumph.

MARULLUS Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?

What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels? 35

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops, 40

Your infants in your arms, and there have sat

The livelong day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.

And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout, 45

That Tiber trembled underneath her banks

To hear the replication of your sounds

Made in her concave shores?

And do you now put on your best attire?

And do you now cull out a holiday? 50

And do you now strew flowers in his way

That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?

Be gone!

Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,

Act One, Scene 1

has trod on my handiwork.

FLAVIUS But why aren't you in your shop today?

Why do you lead these men around the streets?

SECOND CITIZEN Actually, sir, to wear out their shoes, so I'll have
more work. But seriously, sir, we've taken the day off to see 30
Caesar and celebrate his victory.

MARULLUS What is there to celebrate? What treasure does he bring home?

What hostages has he brought to Rome,
Chained as trophies to his chariot wheels? 35

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

Oh, you hard-hearted, cruel men of Rome,

Have you forgotten Pompey? Many times and often

Have you climbed up walls and battlements,

To towers and windows, even to the tops of chimneys, 40

Your infants in your arms, and there have sat

The whole long day, in patient expectation,

To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.

And when you saw his chariot first appear,

Did you not send up a universal cheer, 45

Making the River Tiber tremble beneath its banks

To hear the echoes of your shouts

Made along its curving shores?

And are you now wearing your best clothes?

And are you now giving yourself a holiday? 50

And are you now throwing flowers in the path

Of him that comes in triumph over Pompey's sons?

Be gone!

Run home and fall on your knees.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Act Two

Scene 1 [*The garden of Brutus' home.*] Enter BRUTUS

BRUTUS What, Lucius, ho!

I cannot by the progress of the stars

Give guess how near to day. Lucius, I say!

I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.

When, Lucius, when? Awake, I say! What, Lucius!

5

LUCIUS Called you, my lord?

BRUTUS Get me a taper in my study, Lucius.

When it is lighted, come and call me here.

LUCIUS I will, my lord.

BRUTUS It must be by his death; and, for my part,

10

I know of no personal cause to spurn him,

But for the general. He would be crowned.

How that might change his nature, there's the question.

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,

And that craves wary walking. Crown him that,

15

And then, I grant, we put a sting in him

That at his will he may do danger with.

Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins

Remorse from power. And, to speak truth of Caesar,

Act Two

Scene 1 [*The garden of Brutus' home.*] Enter BRUTUS

BRUTUS Oh, Lucius, hey there!

I cannot see the stars to tell

How near to dawn it is. Lucius, I say!

I wish it were my fault to sleep so soundly.

When are you coming, Lucius? Awake, I say. Hey Lucius! 5

LUCIUS Did you call, my lord?

BRUTUS Put a candle in my study, Lucius.

When it is lighted, come and call me here.

LUCIUS I will, my lord.

BRUTUS Caesar must be killed. For my part, 10

I have no personal reason to strike at him;

It must be for the general good. He wishes to be crowned.

How this might alter his nature, that's the point.

It is sunshine that hatches the snake

And calls for watching your step. Give Caesar a crown 15

And then, I grant, we put a sting in him

So that, whenever he wishes, he may harm us.

Authority is abused when it separates

Power from compassion; and, to be frank about Caesar,

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

I have not known when his affections swayed 20
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But, when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back, 25
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
Then, lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
Will bear no color for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented, 30
Would run to these and these extremities.
And therefore think of him as a serpent's egg,
Which hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS The taper burneth in your closet, sir. 35
Searching the window for a flint, I found
This paper, thus sealed up, and I am sure
It did not lie there when I went to bed. [*Gives him the letter*]

BRUTUS Get you to bed again; it is not day. 40
Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?

LUCIUS I know not, sir.

BRUTUS Look in the calendar, and bring me word.

LUCIUS I will, sir.

He exits

BRUTUS The exhalations whizzing in the air 45
Give so much light that I may read by them.

Act Two, Scene 1

I have not known a time when passions ruled him 20
More than reason. But everyone knows
That humility is young ambition's ladder,
The upward climber's first ascent to power,
And once he's reached the topmost rung,
He turns his back on the ladder, 25
His head in the clouds, scorning the lower steps
By which he rose. Caesar may do the same.
Since he may, he must be stopped. And since the charge
Against him cannot be justified by his present actions,
It must be framed this way: If his present power is increased, 30
It would lead to such and such tyrannical excesses.
Therefore, he must be thought of as a serpent's egg:
Hatched, it would, like all its kind, grow dangerous.
He must be killed in the shell.

Enter LUCIUS

LUCIUS The candle is burning in your study, sir. 35
Searching the ledge for a flint to light it, I found
This letter, sealed up like this, and I am sure
It was not there when I went to bed. [*Gives him the letter*]

BRUTUS Go back to bed; it's not yet day.
Isn't tomorrow the ides of March, boy? 40

LUCIUS I don't know, sir.

BRUTUS Look in the calendar, and come tell me.

LUCIUS I will, sir.

He exits

BRUTUS The meteors hissing in the sky
Give so much light that I can read by it. 45

Glossary

The following terms are taken from the translation of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. The scene and line numbers are given in parentheses after the terms, which are listed in the order they first occur.

Act One

Pompey (scene 1, line 38): popular Roman general, allied with Caesar in the First Triumvirate (ruling group of three), who sided with the Senate against Caesar and fled Rome when Caesar returned and became dictator. Pompey was murdered in Egypt

River Tiber (scene 1, line 46): begins in central Italy and flows through Rome to its mouth at Ostia

Pompey's sons (scene 1, line 52): Gnaeus and Sextus, leaders of the last pocket of armed resistance to Caesar, defeated at the battle of Munda; the play opens with Caesar's triumphant return to Rome

Feast of Lupercal (scene 1, line 68): originally, a festival in honor of Lupercus (the god Pan), protector of flocks and herds; later, the festival adopted by Rome to ward off evil spirits

Lupercal race (scene 2, line 6): Young men dressed only in goat skins ran a course through the city of Rome on the Feast of Lupercal, and barren women touched by them were believed to become fertile

ides of March (scene 2, line 21): March 15

Aeneas (scene 2, line 118): legendary hero who carried his father Anchises from the burning city of Troy and subsequently sailed to Italy and founded Rome

Glossary

- Titinius** (scene 2, line 133): a friend and an ally of Cassius and Brutus
- colossus** (scene 2, line 142): giant bronze statue of the sun god Apollo whose legs, according to legend, spanned the harbor at Rhodes; one of the seven wonders of the world
- great flood** (scene 2, line 158): both the Bible and classical literature relate the story of a universal flood, in which only one virtuous couple was spared to renew the human race
- Brutus** (scene 2, line 165): Lucius Junius Brutus who, in legend, drove out the ancient kings of Rome and helped found the Republic of Rome, and from whom Brutus claimed descent
- Cicero** (scene 2, line 192): leading orator and statesman of Rome
- falling-sickness** (scene 2, line 258): epilepsy, a disorder of the central nervous system, often marked by convulsive attacks
- Pompey's theatre** (scene 3, line 131): first public theatre built by Pompey, located outside the gates of Rome
- alchemy** (scene 3, line 165): medieval science concerned with turning lesser metals into gold

Act Two

- Tarquin** (scene 1, line 54): king of Rome, expelled from power by an ancestor of Brutus
- Erebus** (scene 1, line 87): region between earth and Hades, the underworld of classical mythology
- unicorns** (scene 1, line 214): according to legend, hunters tricked this mythical animal by dodging away from a tree so that the unicorn ran its horn into the trunk, entrapping itself
- Cato** (scene 1, line 307): an orator and a statesman, he fought for Pompey in the civil war and committed suicide to avoid capture by