

# JULIUS CAESAR | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S  
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Oh man, it's a heck of a time to be a Roman! Julius Caesar led one of the most successful military campaigns in history, and he wrote a *horrible* book about it. The Roman Senate was afraid that Caesar had gotten too powerful (or they just *really* hated his book), so they told him to step down from his military command. Instead, Caesar marched his army across the Rubicon River and straight towards Rome. Apparently, he also said "*the die is cast*" when he was *crossing the Rubicon* because his story is full of famous quotes. Anyway, in the year 46 BC, he took over Rome and got named "dictator for life." Awesome.

In the year 45 BC, Caesar was busy: He created the calendar we all use, did a bunch of tax reforms, and fought battles against the few people who openly opposed him. So when 44 BC rolled around, Caesar was ready to party. So: The play opens on February 15, 44 BC, which is the day of the Lupercalia festival (also known as "the Februa," which is where "February" comes from!). At the festival, young men run around a big hill, whacking people with leather straps. Apparently, getting whacked was supposed to bring good luck, especially if you were trying to have kids. Weird.

In the first scene, a bunch of people are crowding to see the new dictator-for-life kick off the festival. They get run off by two tribunes (low-level politicians) who don't have a lot of nice things to say about Caesar. In fact, they seem to really hate the guy. Perhaps Caesar hasn't defeated all of his enemies, after all... Just as they leave, Caesar comes on in a huge crowd of people. The festival is about to begin.

## Act I scene ii

**CAESAR**  
Calpurnia.\*

**CASKA** (CAH-ska)  
Peace, ho! Caesar speaks.

**CAESAR**  
Calpurnia.

**CALPURNIA** (cal-PUR-nee-uh)  
Here, my lord.

**CAESAR**  
Stand you directly in Antonio's way  
When he doth run his course.\* Antonio.\*

**ANTONY**  
Caesar, my lord.

**CAESAR**  
Forget not in your speed, Antonio,  
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,  
The barren\* touchèd in this holy chase  
Shake off their sterile curse.

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

**CAESAR**  
Set on, and leave no ceremony out.\*  
Music starts.

**SOOTHSAYER**  
Caesar!

**CAESAR**  
Ha? Who calls?

**CASKA**  
Bid every noise be still. Peace yet again!

**CAESAR**  
Who is it in the press\* that calls on me?  
I hear a tongue shriller than all the music  
Cry "Caesar!" Speak, Caesar is turned to hear.

**SOOTHSAYER**  
Beware the Ides of March.\*

**CAESAR**  
What man is that?

**BRUTUS**  
A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March.

**CAESAR**  
Set him before me. Let me see his face.

**CASSIUS** (CASS-ee-us)  
Fellow, come from the throng.\* Look upon Caesar.

**CAESAR**  
What sayst thou to me now? Speak once again.

**SOOTHSAYER**  
Beware the Ides of March.

**CAESAR**  
He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass.  
Exeunt.

**PLOT POINT!!**  
This is the first time we are meeting any of the major characters, and Shakespeare sneaks a lot of important information into this short scene. One of those important things is that Calpurnia and Caesar have no children. Why would that be an important thing to know as an audience member? How would being childless affect Caesar—as a person, or as a leader? How might that affect the relationship between Caesar and Calpurnia?

Look at how Caska, Antony, and Cassius treat Caesar.

- Why do you think they're showing off to Caesar?
- Have you met anyone who talks like that to powerful people?

PEACE, HO! CAESAR SPEAKS.

COME FROM THE THROG.  
LOOK UPON CAESAR!



WHEN CAESAR SAYS, "DO THIS," IT IS PERFORMED.

Brutus speaks to Caesar differently.

What can you learn about him from that?



## FAST FORWARD!

Now it's the Ides of March: March 15, 44 BC. We find out that Cassius and Brutus are plotting against Caesar. We don't actually see Caesar again until this scene, but we know that his life is in danger...  
Thunder and lightning.

## Act II scene ii

**CAESAR**  
Nor heaven nor Earth have been at peace tonight.  
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out  
"Help ho, they murder Caesar!"—Who's within?  
Enter a Servant.

**SERVANT**  
My lord.

**CAESAR**  
Go bid the priests do present sacrifice,  
And bring me their opinions of success.\*

**SERVANT**  
I will, my lord.  
He exits. Enter Calpurnia.

**CALPURNIA**  
What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?  
You shall not stir out of your house today.

**CAESAR**  
Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me  
Ne'er looked but on my back.\* When they shall see  
The face of Caesar, they are vanishèd.

**CALPURNIA**  
Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies.  
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,\*  
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,  
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.  
A lioness hath whelpèd\* in the streets,  
And graves have yawnd and yielded up\* their dead.  
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.  
O Caesar, these things are beyond all use.\*  
And I do fear them.

**CAESAR**  
What can be avoided  
Whose end is purposèd\* by the mighty gods?  
Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions  
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.\*

**CALPURNIA**  
When beggars die there are no comets seen;  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.

**CAESAR**  
Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.  
Enter a Servant.

What say the augurers\*?

**SERVANT**  
They would not have you to stir forth today,  
Plucking the entrails of an offering forth,\*  
They could not find a heart within the beast.

**CAESAR**  
The gods do this in shame of cowardice.\*  
Caesar should be a beast without a heart  
If he should stay at home today for fear.  
No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.  
We are two lions littered in one day.\*  
And I the elder and more terrible.  
And Caesar shall go forth.

**CALPURNIA**  
Alas, my lord,  
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.\*  
Do not go forth today. Call it my fear  
That keeps you in the house, and not your own.  
We'll send Mark Antony to the Senate House,  
And he shall say you are not well today.  
Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.

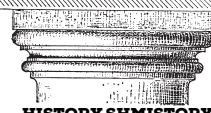
**CAESAR**  
Mark Antony shall say I am not well,  
And for thy humor I will stay at home.

[TO BE CONTINUED...]

## What's in a name?

**CAESAR**  
Julius Caesar's name (pronounced "KAI-sar" in Latin) became a symbol of power all over the world. "Caesar" was the title of Roman emperors, and the word was picked up by many languages, in which it means "ruler":

- Arabic: Qas'r
- Hebrew: Kesar
- German: Kaiser
- Persian: Qaysar
- Polish: Cesarz
- Russian: Tsar (or Czar)
- Turkish: Kayser
- Yoruba: Késàri



## HISTORY SHMISTORY

soothsayer

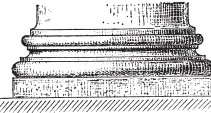
"Sooth" is a very old English word for "the truth" or "reality."

So, a "sooth-sayer" is someone who knows a hidden truth about the future and says it!

But the big question is... once the soothsayer tells you the truth about your future, can you do anything about it?

If you can't change it, then would you still want to know?

If you can change it, then is it really a "sooth"?



- **Calpurnia** - Caesar's wife
- **run his course** - Antony is about to do the run around the hill
- **Antonio** - sometimes he's called "Antony," and sometimes "Antonio"; same dude
- **barren** - infertile (getting whacked by one of the guys running around the hill was supposed to cure infertility)
- **leave no ceremony out** - don't skip any of the traditions
- **the press** - the crowd (so crowded, it feels like getting pressed)
- **Ides of March** - March 15 ("the ides" was around the middle day of each month)
- **throng** - crowd

- **opinions of success** - advice on what to do
- **ne'er looked but on my back** - have never looked me in the eye
- **one within** - a person in the other room
- **whelped** - gave birth
- **yawnd and yielded up** - opened and let out
- **beyond all use** - completely out of the ordinary (beyond all things we are used to)
- **whose end is purposèd** - whose result is already determined
- **these predictions/Are to the world in general as to Caesar** - the bad omens might not refer to Caesar specifically, but just be generally bad signs

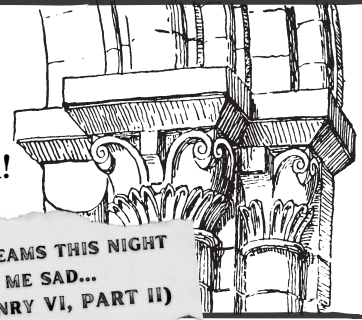
- **augurers** - priests to claim to tell the future
- **plucking the entrails** - Roman priests would attempt to read the future by slaughtering an animal and trying to see symbols in its guts
- **in shame of cowardice** - to shame me for being a coward
- **littered in one day** - born on the same day
- **your wisdom is consumed in confidence** - your common sense is blocked by your overconfidence

# JULIUS CAESAR | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write **ACT IT OUT** Talk about it

*Draw* **THINK ABOUT IT** ... up to you!



MY TROUBLOUS DREAMS THIS NIGHT  
DOTH MAKE ME SAD...  
- GLOUCESTER (HENRY VI, PART II)



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**On the other side**, we left off after Calpurnia had convinced Caesar not to go to see the Senators.

But there wouldn't be much of a story if that was how things stayed.

Watch what happens when Decius Brutus (not regular Brutus—different guy) comes in...

[1.ii CONTINUED]

**CAESAR**

Here's Decius Brutus; he shall tell them so.

**DECIOUS** (DECK-ee-us)

Caesar, all hail! Good morrow, worthy Caesar. I come to fetch you to the Senate House.

**CAESAR**

And you are come in very happy time To bear my greeting to the Senators And tell them that I will not come today. Cannot is false, and that I dare not, falsder. I will not come today. Tell them so, Decius.

**CALPURNIA**

Say he is sick.

**CAESAR**

Shall Caesar send a lie? Have I in conquest stretched mine arm so far. To be afraid to tell graybeards the truth? Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

**DECIOUS**

Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause. Least I be laughed at when I tell them so.

**CAESAR**

The cause is in my will, I will not come. That is enough to satisfy the Senate. But for your private satisfaction,\* Because I love you, I will let you know. Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home. She dreamt tonight she saw my statue, Which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it. And these does she apply for warnings and portents\* And evils imminent,\* and on her knee Hath begged that I will stay at home today.

**DECIOUS**

This dream is all amiss\* interpreted. It was a vision fair and fortunate. Your statue spouting blood in many pipes, In which so many smiling Romans bathed, Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck Reviving blood, and that great men shall press For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.\* This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.

**CAESAR**

And this way have you well expounded\* it.

**DECIOUS**

I have, when you have heard what I can say. And know it now: the Senate have concluded To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar. If you shall send them word you will not come, Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock Apt to be rendered,\* for someone to say "Break up the Senate till another time. When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams." If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper "Lo, Caesar is afraid?" Pardon me, Caesar, for my dear dear love To your proceeding bids me tell you this. And reason to my love is liable.\*

**CAESAR**

How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia! I am ashamed I did yield to them. Give me my robe, for I will go.

Enter Decius.

HE'S TOTALLY  
PART OF THE  
CONSPIRACY!



You do but dream

Calpurnia has a really weird dream. But what does it mean...?

- Her interpretation is clear: It means danger for her husband.
- Decius has another idea (find it on this page!).
- Do dreams have meanings?
- How would you interpret her dream?

Going to the Senate does not work out well for Caesar.

- **Have I in conquest...graybeards the truth?** - did I spend all that time conquering our enemies just to come home and be afraid to tell old men the truth?
- **for your private satisfaction** - secretly, because I can see you're curious
- **portents** - signs of the future (usually bad)
- **imminent** - likely to happen soon
- **amiss** - wrong
- **tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance** - things related to becoming a nobleman. "Tinctures" were the symbols that made up a noble family's coat of arms. "Stains" were the colors they chose to represent their houses. "Relics" were religious icons collected by important families. "Cognizance" was when a family was recognized as noble by the king.

Wait a minute, you might be thinking, *relics and kings and coats of arms?* That doesn't sound very much like ancient Rome!

You'd be right. Those are all things that European families got when they became nobles more than a thousand years after the events of *Julius Caesar*.

When an author is writing a historical story and puts in something from the wrong time period, that's called an **anachronism** (uh-NACK-ro-niz-um). Shakespeare is full of them. *Hamlet* is a student at the University of Wittenburg, which didn't exist in the time when the play is set. There's a game of billiards in *Antony & Cleopatra*, set in ancient Egypt, but billiards wouldn't be invented for more than a thousand years. *Troilus and Cressida* is set during the Trojan War (around 1300 BC), but Hector talks about Aristotle, who wasn't born until 384 BC. And earlier in *Julius Caesar*, Brutus tells Cassius to "count the [chimes of the] clock." But Cassius will be waiting a long time; the first mechanical clock with chimes wouldn't be invented for almost 1500 years!

- Can you think of other anachronisms in stories you've watched or read?  
- Do anachronisms bother you? Or do you not care?  
- Does it matter to you whether the anachronism was on purpose or a mistake?

- **expounded** - explained fully
- **a mock apt to be rendered** - an insult likely to be directed at me
- **reason to my love is liable** - my common sense needs to be less important than my love for you (Decius is apologizing—or seeming to apologize!—suggesting that people would insult Caesar behind his back.)

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Based on this scene, what do you think Caesar and Calpurnia's relationship is like?

- Are they close?
- Do they still love each other? (Did they ever?)
- Do they respect each other?
- How did they meet?
- What do they talk about?
- What do they fight about?
- What makes them laugh?

He gets assassinated by the group of conspirators. Shakespeare's audience would have known the story when they saw the play. Heck, most audiences today know! (But no worries if you don't! You're in good company.) Caesar's assassination is not a surprise to audience members; they know it's going to happen. This poses a challenge to anyone looking to direct the play:

- How do you keep the audience **engaged** when they already know the ending or the most important plot twist? How do you keep the story "**fresh**"?
- Can you think of any other stories that are still **interesting**—even **suspenseful**—when you already know how they'll turn out (we're looking at you, *Titanic!*)? How do they do it?

## LEND ME YOUR EARS

Have you heard these quotes from *Julius Caesar* before?

cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war

BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH

the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.

FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN, LEND ME YOUR EARS

**COWARDS DIE MANY TIMES BEFORE THEIR DEATHS; THE VALIANT NEVER TASTE OF DEATH BUT ONCE**

## ALL AMISS INTERPRETED

**Decius** doesn't say much, but he definitely gets what he wants! (Remember, he's one of the people conspiring to assassinate Caesar.)

What does Decius say that finally convinces Caesar?

**Would** he have convinced you?

**Would** you be convinced by the same things as Caesar?

**When** have you been talked into something?

**How** were you convinced?