



Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar enters Rome on the Feast of Lupercal as a hero beloved by the populace. He has triumphed first over the Gauls, then over the army of Pompey. When the senators see the reaction—including Mark Antony attempting three times to crown him as a king—some take this as a threat to Rome. Cassius in particular has serious misgivings about Caesar's ambition. However, the popularity that Julius Caesar enjoys makes any plot against him particularly difficult. To offset Caesar's support base, Cassius makes overtures to Marcus Brutus, a nobleman known for his integrity and idealism; if Brutus were to support it, a conspiracy would seem more palatable to the citizens of Rome. Brutus is also a close friend of Caesar, which adds to the moral dilemma presented in the play.

As a metaphor for the coming action, a great storm besets Rome. Brutus ponders his course of action, realizing that the conspiracy may well have to contemplate assassination. Eventually, with the prodding of Cassius and others, Brutus comes to rationalize such an act as necessary for a greater good. However, Brutus dissuades the conspirators from slaying Antony with him. Caesar, already warned by a soothsayer and Calphurnia, his wife, ignores all advice to the contrary and pays a visit to the Senate. There he is stabbed to death by Brutus, Cassius, and the rest.

Mark Antony strikes a truce with the conspirators, asking to accompany Caesar's body and speak at his funeral. Brutus agrees, and at the funeral delivers a stirring oratory that explains the reasoning for the assassination. Antony follows with the well-known "Friends, Romans, and countrymen" soliloquy, and through his masterful use of irony stirs the crowd—which to this point had been solidly behind the conspirators—to call for the blood of Cassius, Brutus, and anyone else associated with Caesar's death.

Antony then plots with Octavius (nephew to Julius Caesar) and Lepidus to wrest control of Rome by force of arms. Their ruthlessness exterminates many of the original conspirators, as well as other perceived enemies. Meanwhile, Brutus and Cassius raise armies against them. In a final battle, Brutus initially has success against the forces of Octavius; however, Cassius falls on his own sword when beset by Antony's army. Faced with both Antony and Octavius, Brutus's army is defeated, and Brutus takes his own life rather than be taken captive. Upon discovering the body, Antony laments the tragic fall of Brutus, calling him the noblest of them all.

Dramatis Personae

Julius Caesar

Octavius Caesar, Triumvir

Mark Antony, Triumvir

M. Aemilius Lepidus, Triumvir

Cicero, a senator

Publius, a senator

Popilius Lena, a senator

Marcus Brutus, a conspirator

Cassius, a conspirator

Casca, a conspirator

Trebonius, a conspirator

Ligarius, a conspirator

Decius Brutus, a conspirator

Metellus Cimber, a conspirator

Cinna, a conspirator

Flavius and Marullus, tribunes

Artemedorus, a Sophist of Cnidos

A Soothsayer

Cinna, a Poet

Another Poet

Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, Young Cato, Volumnius

Varro, Clitius, Claudius, Strato, Lucius, Dardanius, servants to Brutus

Pindarus, servant to Cassius

Calphurnia, wife of Caesar

Portia, wife of Brutus

Senators, Citizens, Guards, Attendants