

A CONDENSED VERSION OF

JULIUS CAESAR

WRITTEN IN 1599 BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

CAST

Narrator 1

Reads act and scene introductions

Narrator 2

Reads act and scene introductions

Narrator 3

Reads the stage commands

Julius Caesar

Roman general, consul, and dictator

Marc Antony

friend of Caesar and member of 2nd Triumvirate

Brutus

friend of Caesar turned assassin

Cassius

conspirator against Caesar; assassin

Decius

conspirator against Caesar; assassin

Calphurnia

wife of Caesar

Casca

conspirator against Caesar; assassin

Trebonius

conspirator against Caesar; assassin

Flavius

tribune loyal to Pompey

Marullus

tribune loyal to Pompey

Artemidorus

philosopher loyal to Caesar

Soothsayer

fortuneteller who warns Caesar

Lucius

servant of Brutus

Marcus

servant of Caesar

Gaius

servant of Octavian

Carpenter

woodworker

Cobbler

shoemaker

ACT I, SCENE 1

A STREET IN ROME

Narrator 1.

In the year 44 BC, on February 15, the Feast of Lupercalia, the people take a holiday to celebrate Caesar's victory over Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus, during the civil war between the two power-hungry generals.

Narrator 2.

Marullus and Flavius, two tribunes who supported Pompey, attempt to discourage celebrating workers from celebrating Caesar's victory.

Flavius.

Get away from here!
Home, you lazy creatures, go home!
Is this a holiday?
Hey you, what is your trade?

Carpenter.

Why, sir, a carpenter.

Marullus.

Where are your leather apron and your ruler?
Why do you have your best clothes on?
You, sir, what trade are you?

Cobbler.

A trade, sir? Why, I'm a mender of bad soles.

Flavius.

You are a cobbler, are you?

Cobbler.

I am indeed, sir, a surgeon for old shoes.
When they are in great danger, I heal them.

Flavius.

But why are you not in your shop today?
Why do you lead these people through the streets?

Cobbler.

Really, sir, to wear out their shoes, so I'll have more work.

Carpenter.

But actually, sir, we are taking the day off to see Julius Caesar and to celebrate his victory.

Marullus.

Why rejoice? You fools, you rock heads!
Don't you know what a great man Pompey was?
And now you put on your best clothes and celebrate a holiday as his blood stains the battlefield? Be gone!

Flavius.

Go, go, fellow citizens, weep your tears into the Tiber River, until the water overflows.
A power-hungry tyrant, Caesar, has murdered a servant of Rome, Pompey the Great.

Narrator 3.

[Exit all.]

ACT I, SCENE 2

THE FORUM OF ROME

Narrator 1.

On the same day, Caesar attends the traditional race at the festival of Lupercalia and receives a warning from a soothsayer to beware the ides of March. (The middle day of each month was called the "ides".)

Narrator 2.

After Caesar leaves, Cassius tries to persuade Brutus to turn against Caesar. Caesar returns and mentions to Antony his distrust of Cassius.

Narrator 3.

[A flourish of trumpets announces the approach of Caesar. A large crowd of commoners has assembled; a soothsayer is among them. Enter Caesar; Brutus; Cassius; and Antony, who is stripped down in preparation for running in the games.]

Soothsayer.

Caesar!

Caesar.

Who calls me?

Casca.

Tell everyone to be quiet. Silence everyone!

Caesar.

Who is in the crowd that calls on me?
I hear a voice shriller than all the music. Speak.
Caesar is turned to hear.

Soothsayer.

Beware the ides of March.

Caesar.

Who is that?

Brutus.

A soothsayer tells you to beware the ides of March.

Caesar.

Put him in front of me; let me see his face.

Cassius.

Fellow, come out of the crowd; look at Caesar.

Caesar.

What do you say to me now? Say it one more time.

Soothsayer.

Beware the ides of March.

Caesar.

He is a crazy man; let us ignore him. Come on, let's go.

Narrator 3.

[Trumpets sound as Caesar and his entourage exits. Exit all but Brutus and Cassius.]

Cassius.

Are you going to watch the race?

Brutus.

Not I.

Cassius.

I wish you would.

Brutus.

I don't like sports. And besides, I'm not athletic like Marc Antony. I'm going home.

Cassius.

Brutus, I have watched you lately; I haven't seen in your eyes the kindness and friendliness I used to see.
You have become too stubborn and too distant from your friends.

Brutus.

Cassius, I have been troubled lately by some personal issues which are, perhaps, affecting the way I act.
What's really bothering me is that I'm afraid the people will choose Caesar to be emperor.

Cassius.

You don't want him to be emperor?

Brutus.

Caesar is a good friend of mine; but no, I don't want him to be emperor.

Cassius.

I was born as free as Caesar, so were you; We eat the same foods, and we can both stand the winter's cold just as well as Caesar. One time, on a cold and windy day, when the Tiber River was rising in the storm, Caesar said to me, "Cassius, I dare you to leap with me into this angry river and swim to that spot way over there."

Cassius.

As soon as he said it, dressed as I was, I plunged in and dared him to follow. That's exactly what he did. But before we could arrive at the designated spot, Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I'll sink!" On my shoulder, I from the waves of the Tiber carried the tired Caesar. And this man is now considered a god, and Cassius is a wretched creature and must bow down if Caesar even carelessly nods at him? Let me tell you, Brutus, Caesar is just as human as you or I.

Narrator 3.

[Cheering, trumpets blare in the distance.]

Brutus.

Caesar must be receiving some more honors.

Cassius.

What is so special about the name "Caesar"? Why should that name be spoken more than yours, Brutus? Write them together, your name looks just as good. Say them both, yours sounds as good.

Brutus.

I know what you're trying to do. You're trying to turn me against my friend Caesar. I'm well aware that, for the welfare of Rome, Caesar must not become emperor. And the only way to make sure Caesar does not become emperor is for him to die. But I don't know if I can kill him. He's my friend. I'll have to think about what you've said, Cassius.

Cassius.

I'm glad that my weak words have provoked such a strong reaction from you, Brutus.

Narrator 3.

[Voices and music are heard approaching.]

Brutus.

The games are over, and Caesar is returning.

Narrator 3.

[Re-enter Caesar and his train of followers. Caesar looks at Cassius and turns to Antony.]

Caesar.

Antony.

Antony.

Caesar?

Caesar.

Cassius, over there, has a lean and hungry look. He always seems to be scheming something. Such men are dangerous.

Antony.

Don't be afraid of him, Caesar. He's not dangerous. He is a noble Roman, and your supporter.

Caesar.

I'm not afraid of him, for always I am Caesar. Still, if I were the sort of person who became afraid, I don't know whom I would fear more than Cassius. He seldom smiles. Men like him are never able to enjoy life while they see someone greater than themselves; and for that reason, they are very dangerous.

Narrator 3.

[Trumpets sound. Exit all.]

ACT II, SCENE 1

BRUTUS' ORCHARD IN ROME

Narrator 1.

Shortly before dawn on March 15 (the ides of March), Brutus walks in his garden, unable to sleep, brooding over the decision he must make.

Narrator 2.

Cassius and the conspirators visit Brutus and finalize their plans.

Narrator 3.

[Brutus walks in his garden, talking to himself.]

Brutus.

I know in my heart of hearts that Rome's problems can only be solved by Caesar's death, but I have no personal grudge against him. I'm thinking only of the good of Rome. Caesar wants to be crowned emperor. The question is, how would that change things? Give him a crown, and he becomes a snake with a poisonous bite that he can use to cause trouble with whenever he wants. Caesar always does what is best for Caesar, whether or not it is best for others. Perhaps Cassius is right. Perhaps I have no other choice, for the good of Rome.

Narrator 3.

[There is a knock at the door. Brutus' servant Lucius opens it.]

Lucius.

Sir, it's your friend Cassius at the door.

Brutus.

Is he alone?

Lucius.

No, sir, there are others with him.

Brutus.

Let them in.

Narrator 3.

[Exit Lucius. Enter the conspirators, Cassius, Decius, and Trebonius.]

Cassius.

I think we may have come too early.
Good morning, Brutus. Are we disturbing you?

Brutus.

I was already up, awake all night.

Cassius.

You must know that there is no man here who doesn't honor you.
We all wish you had the same opinion of yourself that every noble Roman has of you.
You are a great man, Brutus.
Have you made a decision about what to do with Caesar?

Brutus.

There is only one thing we can do if we love Rome.

Cassius.

You have made the right decision.

Decius.

Shall we kill only Caesar?

Trebonius.

Let Antony and Caesar die together.

Brutus.

Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Trebonius.
Caesar must bleed for his lust for power!
But, good friends, let's kill him in such a way as to send a strong message, but not in anger.
Let's carve him like a dish fit for the gods, but not chop him up like the body of an animal to be fed to dogs.
We have nothing to fear from Antony, so let's not kill him.
Besides, he'll be too depressed over Caesar's death to be a threat to us.

Narrator 3.

[Clock strikes.]

Cassius.

It's time to go.

Trebonius.

Will Caesar leave his house today or not? He has become superstitious lately.
The soothsayer's warning to beware the ides of March may keep him away from the Capitol today.

Decius.

Don't be afraid of that. If he decides to stay home,
I can change his mind.
Let me work, and I can get him into the right mood, and I'll make sure he goes to the Capitol.

Brutus.

Good gentlemen, look rested and happy.
Let's not let our appearances reveal what we are planning to do.
And so, good night to each of you.

Narrator 3.

[Exit all.]

ACT II, SCENE 2

CAESAR'S HOUSE IN ROME

Narrator 1.

Shortly after dawn on March 15 (the ides of March), Caesar and his wife Calphurnia are both awake because of a terrible storm. Caesar intends to go to the Capitol, but Calphurnia urges him to stay home because of many threatening omens (the storm, for example).

Narrator 2.

Caesar agrees to stay home for her sake, until Decius, one of the conspirators, convinces him that he must not seem to be afraid of his wife's superstitions.

Narrator 3.

[Enter Caesar in his nightgown and his servant Marcus.]

Caesar.

Heaven and earth haven't been at peace tonight.
Three times my wife Calphurnia has cried out in her sleep, "Help! They are murdering Caesar!"
What a nightmare!

Marcus.

My lord?

Caesar.

Go and ask the priests to make a sacrifice right away.
My wife's dreams are a bad omen and we must please the gods with a good sacrifice.

Marcus.

Yes, my lord.

Narrator 3.

[Exit Caesar's servant Marcus. Enter Caesar's wife, Calphurnia, alarmed.]

Calphurnia.

What are you doing, Caesar?
Are you planning to go out to the Capitol today?
No, no. You are not going to set foot out of this house today.

Caesar.

I am Caesar. I've faced many threats in the past, but those threats have never looked at anything but my back.
When they saw the face of Caesar, they vanished.
The threat of your nightmare coming true will be no different.

Calphurnia.

Caesar, I have never believed in omens before, but now they frighten me.
I've heard reports of terrible things happening all over Rome.
First, there's this terrible storm, but that's nothing compared to the rest.
Graves have opened and given up their dead.
Fierce fiery warriors fought in the clouds.
Ghosts shrieked through the streets.
O Caesar, these things are not like anything we are used to, and I'm afraid of them!
Please stay here. I fear something terrible will happen to you if you go.

Caesar.

How can anyone avoid something that is planned by the mighty gods?
What will happen will happen, and there's nothing I can do about it.

Calphurnia.

Please don't go.
Your confidence surpasses your wisdom.
We'll send Marc Antony to the Senate House, and he will say that you are not well today.
I beg you, on my knees, not to go.

Caesar.

Fine! You have persuaded me. I'll tell Marc Antony to say I'm not well, and because you're begging me to stay, I'll stay at home.

Narrator 3.

[Enter Decius.]

Caesar.

Here's Decius. He will take the message to the Senate instead of Marc Antony.

Decius.

All hail mighty Caesar! Good morning, worthy Caesar!
I have come to bring you to the Senate House.

Caesar.

And you've come at the right time to take my greetings to the senators and tell them that I cannot come today.
Actually, it's a lie to say I cannot come. It's an even bigger lie to say I'm afraid to come.
Just tell them I'll not come today. Tell them that, Decius.

Calphurnia.

Say that he is sick.

Caesar.

Shall Caesar send a lie?
I have conquered such a vast area of land and now I'm afraid to tell the senators, a bunch of old men, the truth?
Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.
No further explanation is required, for I am Caesar.

Decius.

Most mighty Caesar, tell me some reason,
Or else I'll be laughed at when I tell them this.

Caesar.

The reason is that I have decreed it; I'll not come.
That is enough to satisfy the Senate; but for your own peace of mind, because I'm your friend, I'll let you know the full reason.
Calphurnia here, my wife, keeps me at home.
She dreamed tonight that she saw my statue, which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, poured out pure blood.
Many Roman citizens came to the statue smiling, and washed their hands in the blood.
Calphurnia interprets these visions as warnings and signs of evils to come, and on her knees, she begged that I would stay at home today.

Decius.

This dream is interpreted all wrong;
Actually, it was a positive and fortunate vision she saw in her sleep.
Your statue spouting blood from many spouts means that great Rome will suck life-giving blood from you, and that great men will come to you for honors and will always remember you.
This is what Calphurnia's dream means.

Caesar.

Sounds good to me.

Decius.

Besides, you have to go to the Senate today because the Senate has decided to present a crown to you today.
If you send a message that you'll not come, their minds might change.

Caesar.

Now your fears seem foolish, don't they Calphurnia!
I'm ashamed of myself for giving in to them.
There'll be no more delay.
Give me my robe. I'm on my way to the Capitol.

Narrator 3.

[Exit All.]

ACT II, SCENE 3

*A STREET IN ROME NEAR THE CAPITOL,
CLOSE TO BRUTUS HOUSE*

Narrator 1.

Artemidorus, one of Caesar's supporters, has learned about the plot against Caesar.

Narrator 2.

He reads to himself a letter of warning he has written, then waits in the street for Caesar to pass by.

Narrator 3.

[Enter Artemidorus, reading a paper.]

Artemidorus.

"Caesar, beware of Brutus; watch out for Cassius; stay away from Casca; don't trust Trebonius; watch Decius carefully. All these men have the same goal, and it is against Caesar. If you are not immortal, look around you. Overconfidence allows a conspiracy to succeed. The mighty gods defend you!
Your devoted Friend,
Artemidorus."

I'll stand here until Caesar passes by.
Then I'll give him this letter.
If you read this, O Caesar, you might live;
If not, the Fates will be on the side of the traitors.

ACT III, SCENE 1

*THE SENATE HOUSE CHAMBER AT THE
CAPITOL*

Narrator 1.

Both the Soothsayer and Artemidorus try to warn Caesar outside the Capitol, but he refuses to listen to them.

Narrator 2.

Once Caesar goes into the Capitol, the conspirators gather around him, pretending to ask for the pardon of the brother of Casca.

Narrator 3.

[The Senate sits on a higher level, waiting for Caesar to appear.]

[A flourish of trumpets blares as Caesar and his entourage enter. Enter Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Decius, Casca, Trebonius, Antony, and others. Caesar stops in front of the Soothsayer.]

Caesar.

The ides of March have arrived.

Soothsayer.

Yes, Caesar, but they have not passed. The ides are still upon us, aren't they?

Narrator 3.

[Artemidorus steps up to Caesar with his warning.]

Artemidorus.

Hail, Caesar! Read this document.

Narrator 3.

[Caesar pushes Artemidorus' paper aside and turns away.]

Artemidorus.

Don't wait, Caesar. Read it right now!

Caesar.

What? Is this man crazy?

Casca.

Artemidorus, get out of the way!
Be fortunate Caesar has not decided to have you arrested.

Narrator 3.

[Casca and the other conspirators force Artemidorus away from Caesar.]

[Caesar goes into the Senate House, the rest follow him. Cassius nervously talks to Brutus.]

Cassius.

I hope Casca can distract Caesar.
Brutus, if our plot is discovered, I'd rather kill myself than be convicted of treason and executed by Caesar.

Brutus.

Cassius, stay calm. We must act as if everything were normal.

Brutus.

Look, Trebonius is carrying out his part of our plot with perfect timing.
See, he's getting Marc Antony out of the way.

Narrator 3.

[Trebonius approaches Marc Antony.]

Trebonius.

My good friend, Marc Antony. Come with me.
I have something important to tell you.

Antony.

Can it wait? Caesar will soon speak.

Trebonius.

It will take but a moment, and is for the good of Rome.

Narrator 3.

[Exit Antony and Trebonius.]

Decius.

Is everyone ready? Casca, get ready to distract Caesar.

Brutus.

I think we are all ready to defend Rome from this would-be emperor.

Cassius.

Casca, you'll be the first that raises your hand against Caesar.

Narrator 3.

[Caesar seats himself in his high Senate chair.]

Caesar.

Are we all ready? What is now wrong with Rome that Caesar and his Senate must make right?

All.

Hail, Caesar! The Senate stands ready.

Casca.

Most high, most mighty, and most powerful Caesar, I throw before you a humble heart.
As you know, my brother was recently exiled from Rome.
Mighty Caesar, you have the power to allow him to return to Rome, his homeland.
I beg of you to let my brother return to Rome from exile.

Narrator 3.

[Casca kneels at Caesar's feet.]

Caesar.

I must stop you, Casca.
This begging and groveling might change the

minds of ordinary men, but not me.

Sweet words, low bows, and behavior fit for a dog will not change what Caesar has decided.
Your brother is banished by law, Casca.
If you bow and beg and grovel for him,
I'll kick you like a mangy dog out of my way.

Casca.

Is there no way you'll change your mind for the return of my banished brother?
Is there nothing I or anyone else can say that will thaw Caesar's cold heart?

Brutus.

Caesar, I ask that the brother of Casca may immediately have the right to return to Rome.

Caesar.

What, Brutus?

Cassius.

Pardon me, Caesar!
I, the lowly Cassius, fall to your feet to beg for freedom for the brother of Casca.

Caesar.

I'm as steady as the Northern Star, which has no equal in the sky.
It is always true and immovable.
Like it, I will not flicker. I will not change.

Decius.

O Caesar!

Caesar.

Get away from me, you beggars.

Brutus.

Great Caesar!

Caesar.

Can't you see that even Brutus, my dear friend, is kneeling and begging and that still doesn't influence me? Who can change the course of events once Caesar has decided?

Casca.

My hands will speak for me! Mighty Caesar!

Narrator 3.

[Casca, Cassius, and Decius stab Caesar. Some of the other senators join in.]

[Antony and Trebonius return to see the last of the attackers, Brutus, join in the stabbing.]

Caesar.

"Et tu, Bruté?" (*You too Brutus?*) - Then fall Caesar!

Narrator 3.

[Caesar, in complete shock at what is happening to him, and in even greater shock that Brutus has joined in the assassination, covers his face so no one will see his shame at having been defeated in this way. Mighty Caesar dies.]

Decius.

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!
Shout the good news in the streets!

Cassius.

Some of you go to the speakers' platforms and call out, "Liberty, freedom!"

Brutus.

Senators and people of Rome, the price of Caesar's lust for power has been paid.

Antony.

O mighty Caesar!
Are all your conquests, glories, triumphs, and spoils shrunk to this small amount?
Good luck to you in the afterlife.

Narrator 3.

[The conspirators gather near Antony.]

Antony.

I don't know, what your plans are, who else will die by your hands.
If I am to die like Caesar, then there is no better time than now.
I beg you, if you have a grudge against me, do what you want.
Strike me with your bloodstained hands so I can die with my friend and leader, Caesar, the greatest man of this time.

Brutus.

O Antony, don't beg us to kill you!
Right now we must seem bloody and cruel, because of the blood on our hands; but you don't see what's in our hearts.
We did this for the good of Rome.
Our swords are harmless to you, Marc Antony.
Our arms, strong in hate of tyranny are open to embrace you as a brother. Join us.

Cassius.

You'll have as much to gain as anyone from the new government.

Brutus.

Just be patient until we have calmed the crowds, who are shaking with fear.
Then I will explain to you the reason why I, who was Caesar's friend when I struck him, acted the way I did.

Narrator 3.

[Exit all but Marc Antony – and Caesar...of course. Enter Octavian's servant, Gaius.]

Gaius.

O Caesar!

Antony.

Quickly answer me.
You serve Octavian Caesar, don't you?

Gaius.

I do, Marc Antony.

Antony.

Do you know where he is?

Gaius.

He has set up camp about twenty-one miles outside Rome.

Antony.

Go to him and tell him what has happened.
Let's see how the mighty general Octavian will react to the murder of his uncle.
Give me a hand.

Narrator 3.

[Antony and Gaius exit with Caesar's body.]

ACT III, SCENE 2

CAESAR'S FUNERAL AT THE FORUM OF ROME

Narrator 1.

Antony speaks to the citizens. Antony cleverly manages to turn the crowd against the assassins by telling them of Caesar's good works and his concern for the people.

Narrator 2.

This is proven by Caesar's will, which states that Caesar has left all his wealth to the people. By this time, Octavian has arrived with his army and Brutus and Cassius have left the city.

Narrator 3.

[A large group of citizens, disturbed by the murder of Caesar, has gathered. Antony addresses them.]

Antony.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil things that men do live on after them; The good things are often buried with their bones. So let it be this way with Caesar. I come to speak at Caesar's funeral because he has brought many captives home to Rome, whose ransoms filled the government treasury.

Antony.

Did this seem ambitious of Caesar?
Whenever the poor have cried, Caesar has wept. An ambitious man should be made of sterner stuff.
But Brutus says Caesar was ambitious; and Brutus is an honorable man.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved Brutus!
This was the most unkindest cut of all; because when the noble Caesar saw him stab, ingratitude, stronger than traitors' arms, totally defeated him.
O, now we weep for Caesar. Look at this! Here is his body, damaged, as you see, by the traitors.

Narrator 3.

[Antony pulls the cloak off Caesar's body.]

Carpenter.

O horrible sight!

Cobbler.

O noble Caesar!

Lucius.

O sad day!

Marcus.

O traitors, villains!

Artemidorus.

We will get revenge.

All.

Revenge! Look around! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Don't let a traitor live!

Carpenter.

We'll burn the house of Brutus.

Marcus.

Let's go then! Come, look for the conspirators.

Antony.

Listen to me still, countrymen. Still listen to me speak.
Here is the will, under Caesar's seal.
He gives to every Roman citizen, to each and every man, seventy-five drachmas of Caesar's own money.

Lucius.

You see, now in death Caesar's generosity continues through his will!

Cobbler.

Most noble Caesar! We'll revenge his death!

Gaius.

O royal Caesar!

Antony.

Listen to me patiently.

All.

Be quiet!

Antony.

In addition, he has left you all his paths, his private gardens, and newly planted orchards, on this side of the Tiber River.
He has left them to you, and to your heirs forever.

Artemidorus.

O Caesar! We'll burn his body in the holy place and with the burning pieces of wood burn the traitors' houses.
Pick up the body of our fallen Caesar.

Marcus.

Go get fire!

Cobbler.

Let's burn the city benches!

Carpenter.

We'll burn the benches, windows, anything!

Lucius.

And then we will burn the traitors' houses.

Narrator 3.

[Exit citizens with the body.]

FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

Crassus

- killed by the Parthians – 53 BC

Pompey

- killed by Julius Caesar at the battle of Pharsalus – 48 BC

Julius Caesar

- outlived the other triumvirs to become “Dictator Perpetuus”
- assassinated by senators on the “ides of March” – March 15th, 44 BC

SECOND TRIUMVIRATE

Marcus Lepidus

- exiled from Rome by Octavian – 36 BC

Marc Antony

- committed suicide after hearing false information regarding the death of Cleopatra after losing to Octavian at the Battle of Actium – 30 BC

Octavian → Caesar Augustus

- outlived the other triumvirs, promised the Senate that he would restore peace
- Senate proclaimed him to be “Augustus” (the revered one)
- Rome’s first emperor – 27 BC
- Began the *Pax Romana*