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opening extract from

Julius Caesar

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published by

b small publishing

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THE BEGINNINGS OF REVOLT

Caesar's procession makes its way through the streets towards the Palatine Hill¹ while the people celebrate.



Forget not in your speed, Antonio, to touch Calpurnia...

The barren,² touched in this holy chase,³ shake off their sterile⁴ curse.

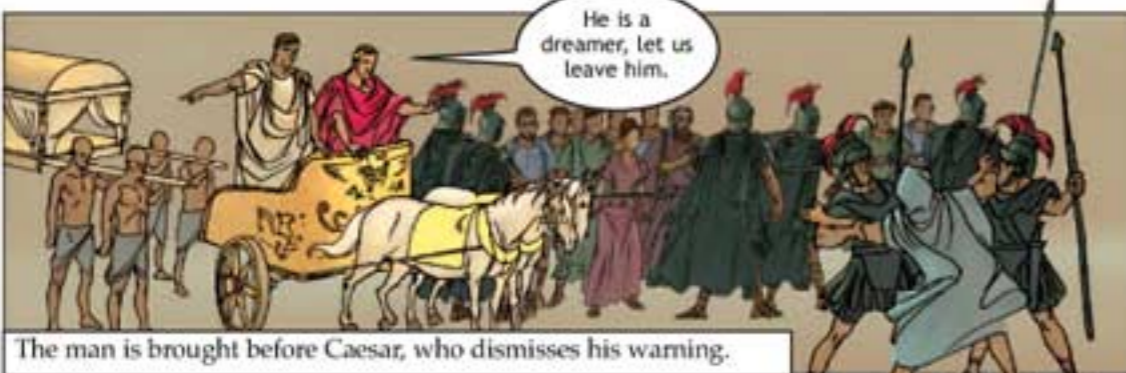
Beware the Ides of March!⁵



Caesar has no heir, because his wife Calpurnia can't have children. He reminds his general and friend, Mark Antony, of a Roman superstition about this.



A soothsayer⁶ calls out to Caesar as he passes.



He is a dreamer, let us leave him.

The man is brought before Caesar, who dismisses his warning.

Once Caesar and his followers have passed by, the senators¹ Cassius and Brutus remain.



Will you go see the order of the course?²

I am not gamesome.³

I do lack some part of that quick spirit⁴ that is in Antony.

If I have veiled my look⁵...

I turn the trouble of my countenance merely upon myself.⁶

What means this shouting?

I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king.



Cassius asks Brutus, his brother-in-law, what is the matter.



Cassius says the people of Rome love Brutus. Brutus is suspicious of his flattery. They hear shouts.

Cassius tests Brutus' loyalty to Caesar. He hopes Brutus will join his plot to get rid of Caesar.

Ay, do you fear it?

Then must I think you would not have it so.



The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars...

but in ourselves.

What you would work me to, I have some aim.⁷



He suggests that they are to blame for Caesar's fame.

Cassius tells how he once saved Caesar from drowning and how fever turned this 'god' into a coward.

Once, upon a raw and gusty day...



... 'tis true, this god did shake.

Casca brings news that Caesar was offered the crown, but refused it.



The common herd was glad.⁸

Well, Brutus, thou art noble...

Yet, I see, thy honourable mettle may be wrought from that it is disposed.⁹



The men arrange to meet the next night, and Cassius is left alone.

8 1. Palatine Hill: one of seven small hills on which the city of Rome was built. It is one of the most ancient parts of the city. 2. barren: unable to produce children. 3. holy chase: sacred procession. 4. sterile: means the same as 'barren'. 5. Ides of March: the 15th of March. 6. soothsayer: a person who claims to foretell the future.

1. senators: members of the Senate, the governing body of ancient Rome. 2. the order of the course: the rest of the procession. 3. gamesome: fun-loving. 4. quick spirit: enthusiasm. 5. veiled my look: frowned. 6. I turn... myself: I'm thinking about my own problems. 7. What you... aim: I know what you're trying to make me do. 8. The common herd was glad: The common folk were cheering (because this act further convinces the people that Caesar is noble). 9. thy honourable... disposed: though you are honourable, it is possible to persuade you.

OMENS FROM THE HEAVENS



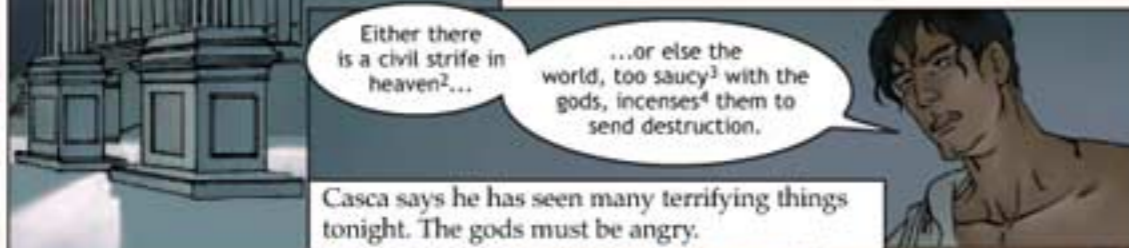
That night, thunder and lightning crash across the city.



Good even,¹ Casca.

Why are you breathless, and why stare you so?

Casca rushes into the street, pale with fear. Cicero spots him.



Either there is a civil strife in heaven²...

...or else the world, too saucy³ with the gods, incenses⁴ them to send destruction.

Casca says he has seen many terrifying things tonight. The gods must be angry.



He's seen a slave with his hands on fire, and he met a lion by the Capitol.⁵



Yesterday he heard there were men walking down the streets on fire...



...and an owl had sat screeching in the marketplace in broad daylight.

10 1. even: evening. 2. civil strife in heaven: war between the gods. 3. saucy: insolent, rude. 4. incenses: angers. 5. Capitol: another of the seven hills of Rome, site of the temple of Jupiter and the ancient citadel.



Indeed, it is a strange-disposed¹ time.

But men may construe things after their fashion, clean from the purpose of the things themselves.²



Cicero thinks Casca is exaggerating.



Cicero leaves, and Cassius arrives to meet Casca.



A man no mightier than thyself or me.

'Tis Caesar that you mean.

Cassius says one man is responsible for the anger of the gods. They think Caesar wants to rule alone.



Indeed they say the senators tomorrow mean to establish Caesar as a king.

I know where I will wear this dagger then.

Cinna the senator arrives. Cassius has already convinced him and other senators to help. They'll be ready to kill Caesar once his friend Brutus is on their side.



O Cassius, if you could but win the noble Brutus to our party.⁵



So every bondman³ in his own hand bears⁴ the power to cancel his captivity.

If they don't want to be ruled, Caesar must die.



Take this paper...lay it in the praetor's⁶ chair...

...where Brutus may but find it.



Three parts of him is ours already...

...and the man entire, upon the next encounter, yields him ours.

Casca and Cassius will go to Brutus' house to try to persuade him to help them with the plot.

11 1. strange-disposed: odd. 2. But men ... themselves: People tend to interpret things in their own way, and may not understand the real meaning at all. 3. bondman: slave. 4. bears: holds. 5. win ... party: convince Brutus to join us. 6. praetor: senior magistrate - a position in the senate held by Brutus.

MURDER IN THE SENATE

The senators of Rome make their way to the Senate House.



As the senators gather inside, Cassius and Brutus are nervous. Trebonius leads Mark Antony outside.



Caesar starts the session.



Metellus Cimber kneels to ask for his brother's exile to be withdrawn.



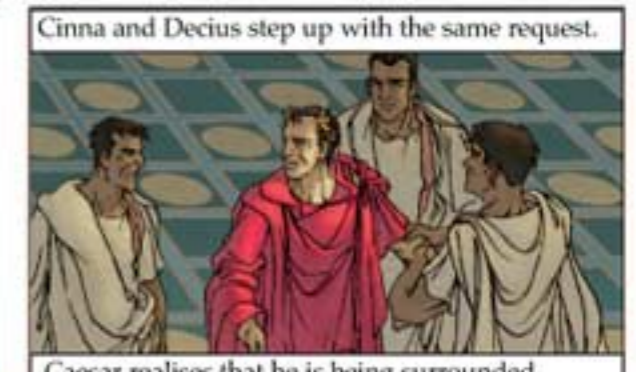
Metellus asks if any other person will plead for his brother.



Brutus comes forward and kisses Caesar's hand.



Caesar cannot disguise his shock. He senses that Brutus is turning against him.



Caesar realises that he is being surrounded.



Casca pulls a knife from inside his toga.



Casca stabs Caesar in the neck...



...and the others join in.



Finally, Brutus stabs his old friend as well.



The deed is done. The senators rejoice.

1. knows his time: acts on cue. 2. What is... redress?: What wrongs are there that we need to put right?
 3. by decree: by the judgement of the courts. 4. fawn: beg. 5. spurn: kick. 6. cur: mongrel.
 7. Desiring thee that: I want you to allow. 8. freedom of repeal: pardon.

1. *Et tu, Brute?*: Latin for 'Even you, Brutus?' Caesar cannot believe his friend's betrayal.