

*Julius Caesar*  
Act I, scene iii

SCENE III. The same. A street.

*Thunder and lightning.*

*Enter from opposite sides, CASCA, with his sword drawn, and CICERO*

**CICERO**

Good even, Casca: brought you Caesar home?  
Why are you breathless? and why stare you so?

**CASCA**

Are not you moved, when all the sway of earth  
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,  
I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds 5  
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen  
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,  
To be exalted with the threatening clouds:  
But never till to-night, never till now,  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire. 10  
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction.

**CICERO**

Why, saw you any thing more wonderful?

**CASCA**

A common slave--you know him well by sight-- 15  
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn  
Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand,  
Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd.  
Besides--I ha' not since put up my sword--  
Against the Capitol I met a lion, 20  
Who glared upon me, and went surly by,  
Without annoying me: and there were drawn  
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,  
Transformed with their fear; who swore they saw  
Men all in fire walk up and down the streets. 25  
And yesterday the bird of night (*owl*) did sit  
Even at noon-day upon the market-place,  
Hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies  
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say  
'These are their reasons; they are natural;' 30  
For, I believe, they are **portentous things**  
Unto the climate that they point upon.

**CICERO**

Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time:  
But men may construe things after their fashion,  
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves. 35  
Come Caesar to the Capitol to-morrow?

**CASCA**

He doth; for he did bid Antonius  
Send word to you he would be there to-morrow.

**CICERO**

Good night then, Casca: this disturbed sky  
Is not to walk in. 40

**CASCA**

Farewell, Cicero.  
*Exit CICERO*  
*Enter CASSIUS*

**CASSIUS**

Who's there?

**CASCA**

A Roman.

CASSIUS

Casca, by your voice.

CASCA

Your ear is good. Cassius, what night is this! 45

CASSIUS

A very pleasing night to honest men.

CASCA

Who ever knew the heavens menace so?

CASSIUS

Those that have known the earth so full of faults.  
For my part, I have walk'd about the streets,  
Submitting me unto the perilous night, 50  
And, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,  
Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone;  
And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open  
The breast of heaven, I did present myself  
Even in the aim and very flash of it. 55

CASCA

But wherefore did you so much tempt the heavens?  
It is the part of men to fear and tremble,  
When the most mighty gods by tokens send  
Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.

CASSIUS

You are dull, Casca, and those sparks of life 60  
That should be in a Roman you do want,  
Or else you use not. You look pale and gaze  
And put on fear and cast yourself in wonder,  
To see the strange impatience of the heavens:  
But if you would consider the true cause 65  
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,  
Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,  
Why old men fool and children calculate,  
Why all these things change from their ordinance  
Their natures and preformed faculties 70  
To monstrous quality,--why, you shall find  
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits,  
To make them instruments of fear and warning  
Unto some monstrous state.  
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man 75  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol,  
A man no mightier than thyself or me  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown 80  
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

CASCA

'Tis Caesar that you mean; is it not, Cassius?

CASSIUS

Let it be who it is: for Romans now  
Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors;  
But, woe the while! our fathers' minds are dead, 85  
And we are govern'd with our mothers' spirits;  
Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.

CASCA

Indeed, they say the senators tomorrow  
Mean to establish Caesar as a king;  
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land, 90  
In every place, save here in Italy.

CASSIUS

I know where I will wear this dagger then;  
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:  
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;

Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat: 95  
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,  
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,  
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;  
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,  
Never lacks power to dismiss itself. 100  
If I know this, know all the world besides,  
That part of tyranny that I do bear  
I can shake off at pleasure.

*Thunder still*

**CASCA**  
So can I:  
So every bondman in his own hand bears 105  
The power to cancel his captivity.

**CASSIUS**  
And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?  
Poor man! *I know he would not be a wolf,  
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:  
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds (deer; servants).* 110

Those that with haste will make a mighty fire  
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,  
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves  
For the base matter to illuminate  
So vile a thing as Caesar! But, O grief, 115  
Where hast thou led me? I perhaps speak this  
Before a willing bondman; then I know  
My answer must be made. But I am arm'd,  
And dangers are to me indifferent.

**CASCA**  
You speak to Casca, and to such a man 120  
That is no fleering tell-tale. Hold, my hand:  
Be factious for redress of all these griefs,  
And I will set this foot of mine as far  
As who goes farthest.

**CASSIUS**  
There's a bargain made. 125  
Now know you, Casca, I have moved already  
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans  
To undergo with me an enterprise  
Of honourable-dangerous consequence;  
And I do know, by this, they stay for me 130  
In Pompey's porch: for now, this fearful night,  
There is no stir or walking in the streets;  
And the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible. 135

**CASCA**  
Stand close awhile, for here comes one in haste.

**CASSIUS**  
'Tis Cinna; I do know him by his gait;  
He is a friend.

*Enter CINNA*

Cinna, where haste you so?  
**CINNA**  
To find out you. Who's that? Metellus Cimber? 140

**CASSIUS**  
No, it is Casca; one incorporate  
To our attempts. Am I not stay'd for, Cinna?  
**CINNA**  
I am glad on 't. What a fearful night is this!  
There's two or three of us have seen strange sights.  
**CASSIUS**

Am I not stay'd for? tell me.	145
<b>CINNA</b>	
Yes, you are.	
O Cassius, if you could	
But win the noble Brutus to our party--	
<b>CASSIUS</b>	
Be you content: good Cinna, take this paper,	
And look you lay it in the praetor's chair,	150
Where Brutus may but find it; and throw this	
In at his window; set this up with wax	
Upon old Brutus' statue: all this done,	
Repair to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us.	
Is Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?	155
<b>CINNA</b>	
All but Metellus Cimber; and he's gone	
To seek you at your house. Well, I will hie,	
And so bestow these papers as you bade me.	
<b>CASSIUS</b>	
That done, repair to Pompey's theatre.	
<i>Exit CINNA</i>	
Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day	160
See Brutus at his house: three parts of him	
Is ours already, and the man entire	
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.	
<b>CASCA</b>	
O, he sits high in all the people's hearts:	
And that which would appear offence in us,	165
His countenance, like richest alchemy,	
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.	
<b>CASSIUS</b>	
Him and his worth and our great need of him	
You have right well conceited. Let us go,	
For it is after midnight; and ere day	170
We will awake him and be sure of him.	
<i>Exeunt</i>	