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opening extract from

Julius Caesar

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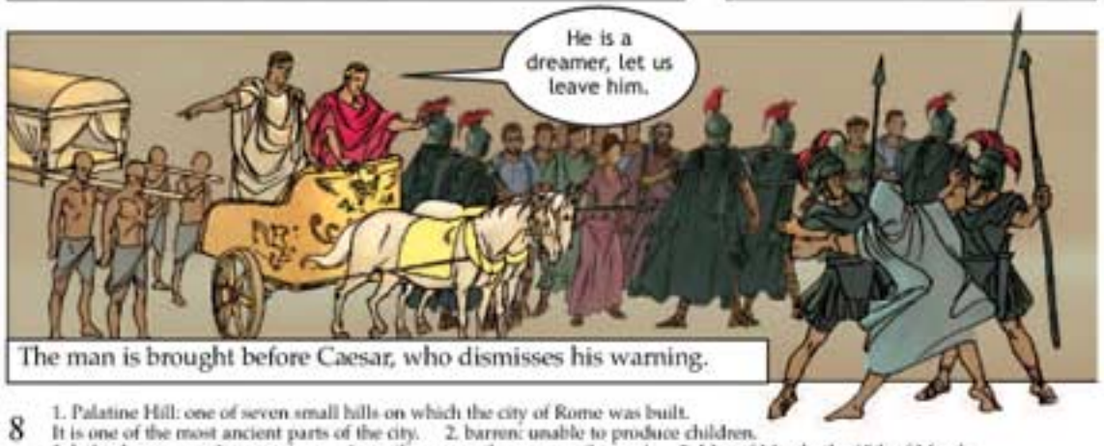
THE BEGINNINGS OF REVOLT

Caesar's procession makes its way through the streets towards the Palatine Hill[1] while the people celebrate.



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 soothsayer[6] calls out to Caesar as he passes.



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

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.

Once Caesar and his followers have passed by, the senators[1] Cassius and Brutus remain.





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.





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.



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





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

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.

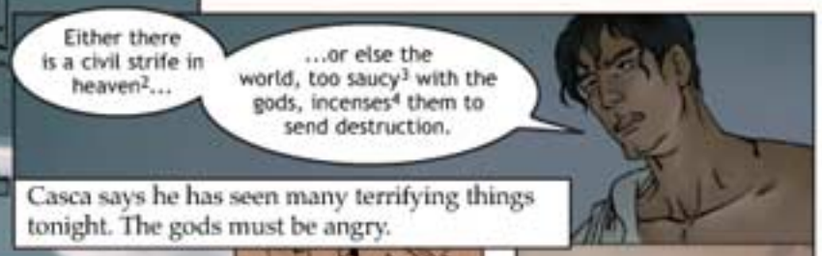
Omens from The Heavens



That night, thunder and lightning crash across the city.



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



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.

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.



Cicero thinks Casca is exaggerating.



Cicero leaves, and Cassius arrives to meet Casca.



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





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

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.





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

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.

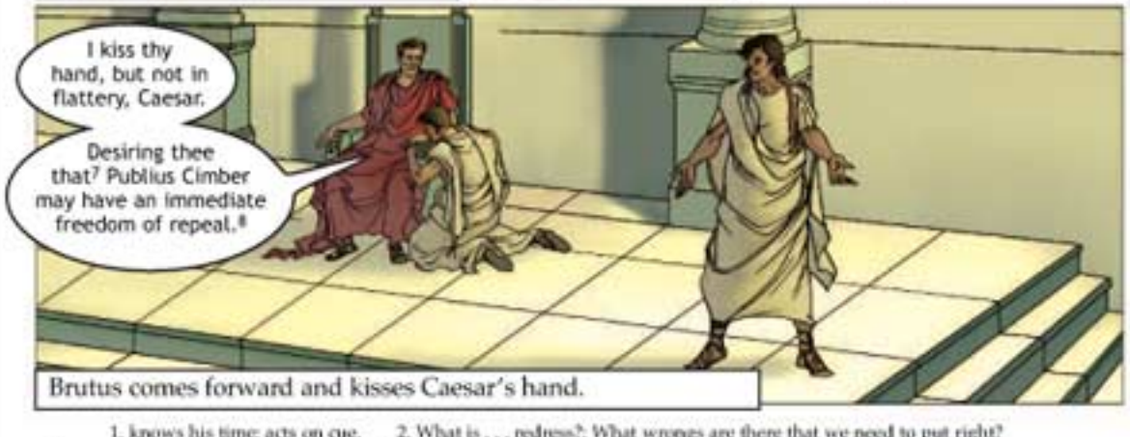


Metellus Cimber kneels to ask for his brother's exile to be withdrawn.





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



Brutus comes forward and kisses Caesar's hand.

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.



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

Cinna and Decius step up with the same request.



Caesar realises that he is being surrounded.



Casca pulls a knife from inside his toga.



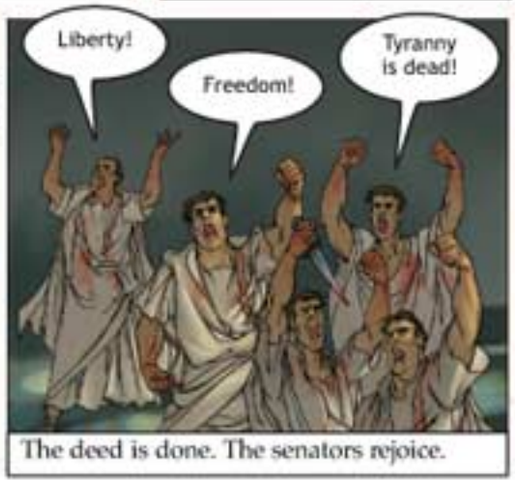
Casca stabs Caesar in the neck...



...and the others join in.



Finally, Brutus stabs his old friend as well.



The deed is done. The senators rejoice.

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