

William Shakespeare's
THE TRAGEDY OF
Julius Caesar



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cover & p.1 *The Murder of Julius Caesar* by Karl von Piloty/The Granger Collection, New York

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar **Story Summary**

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is the tragic true story of the betrayal and assassination of Roman ruler Julius Caesar in 44 BC. After successfully conquering much of the ancient world, Caesar is invited to lead the Roman Empire. Cassius and other members of the Roman senate fear that Caesar will become a power-hungry dictator. They decide Caesar must be stopped. They enlist Caesar's trusted friend, Brutus, to help murder the leader as a patriotic act for the good of Rome.

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Tips for **Performing** Reader's Theater

Adapted from Aaron Shepard

- Do not let your script hide your face. If you cannot see the audience, your script is too high.
- Look up often when you speak. Do not just look at your script.
- Speak slowly so the audience knows what you are saying.
- Speak loudly so everyone can hear you.
- Speak with feeling. If the character is sad, let your voice be sad. If the character is surprised, let your voice be surprised.
- Stand up straight. Keep your hands and feet still.
- Remember that even when you are not speaking, you are still your character.

Tips for **Performing** Reader's Theater *(cont.)*

- If the audience laughs, wait for the laughter to stop before you speak again.
- If someone in the audience talks, do not pay attention.
- If someone walks into the room, do not pay attention.
- If you make a mistake, pretend it was right.
- If you drop something, try to leave it where it is until the audience is looking somewhere else.
- If a reader forgets to read his or her part, see if you can read the part instead, make something up, or just skip over it. Do not whisper to the reader!



The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Characters

Marc Antony

Brutus

Julius Caesar

Portia

Cassius

Octavius

Setting

This reader's theater is set in ancient Rome in 44 BC. It begins on the streets of the ancient city. Scenes also occur in the homes of both Brutus and Caesar and at the Senate. The story concludes on the battlefields at Philippi.



Act I, Scene I

The streets of Rome after the victorious Battle of Pompey

Marc Antony: Caesar, the holiday that Rome has declared in your honor is well deserved, and now is the time to rejoice!

Julius Caesar: Marc Antony, I feel greatly encouraged by our victory in Pompey. The sons of the Roman General of Pompey, my archrivals, are now gone. They are dead, just like their father. I wonder what we should look for in the days to come.

Marc Antony: I think we should look forward to you becoming the King of Rome, but I wonder why you are so reluctant. I offered you the crown three times in front of the crowds, and you could not miss hearing the people cheering wildly. Why did you not accept?

Julius Caesar: Marc Antony, I cannot accept the crown at this time. I need to think carefully about your offer.

Marc Antony: Why do you hesitate at the thought? What worries you so?



Julius Caesar: I need to do what is in the best interest of Rome, my friend. I am also worried about what the soothsayer predicted. He said, “Beware the Ides of March.” I do not understand what horror might occur on the fifteenth day of March.

Marc Antony: That soothsayer only speaks in riddles. There is nothing to fear, for you are a great hero, and Rome desperately needs you.

Julius Caesar: I promise to think about your offer and make a decision very soon. Look, I see my soldiers, Brutus and Cassius. I deeply distrust Cassius, but Brutus has been a loyal soldier and a true friend. Let us wave to them, and then I must leave, for I have much to do.

Act I, Scene II

The streets of Rome a few minutes later

Cassius: What is disturbing you, Brutus? You appear distant and deeply bothered lately. Draw closer, and speak to me about what is upsetting you.

Brutus: I have been at war with myself, Cassius. I have strange and disturbing feelings about our victory in this battle.



Cassius: Brutus, you are a truly heroic man and I wish you could see yourself as everyone else sees you, for then you would realize how very honored and respected you are. Is that what is concerning you?

Brutus: No, Cassius. I am haunted by my feelings of what may happen with Caesar. I fear that the people want him to become king. I am afraid his kingdom might overturn the republic here in Rome.

Cassius: You speak as if you did not want Caesar to accept Marc Antony’s offer to be king.

Brutus: I do respect Caesar. I will bravely fight for him in battle, but my soul rebels at the idea of him as king. There is something in men that turns evil when power over others is granted to them. Let us leave. I will keep my worries to myself.

Cassius: Nonsense, Brutus. Why should you worry alone? There are many others who share your concern against Caesar becoming king. He does not deserve this honor.

Brutus: What are you saying?



Cassius: Caesar is treated like a god even though he is merely a man. Many people agree that for the good of Rome, we must take action before Caesar has the chance to rule.

Brutus: I bear no ill feelings against Caesar, but I will carefully consider what you have said. I only want to do as the people of Rome wish. You have given me much to think about.

Cassius: Brutus, my friend, go home this evening and consider the terrible things that might happen to Rome if Caesar is made king. Maybe we should meet later to speak more about this.

Brutus: Yes, Cassius. I will meet with you tonight. In the meantime, I will think more on this matter. Goodbye, my friend.

Cassius: Goodbye, Brutus. Oh, I am glad that he is gone! I must get Brutus to help me, for Caesar loves and trusts Brutus, and without him, I have no possibility of getting near Caesar. Brutus wants only what is good for Rome, so I must convince him that all of Rome wants Caesar dead. I will write many anonymous letters expressing these sentiments and give them to Brutus. He will surely be fooled by the letters and join my cause.



Act I, Scene III

The home of Brutus and Portia

Portia: What is wrong with you, my husband? You seem sick with worry.

Brutus: I am upset over a conversation I had with Cassius. But it is not important, my dear.

Portia: If something concerns you, Brutus, then it is of great significance to me. But wait, I hear someone at the door. I will return in a moment.

Brutus: Who was at the door, Portia?

Portia: It was a servant whom I have not seen before. He brought letters for you. He told me to have you read them immediately. Can you tell me what they say?

Brutus: No, Portia, I cannot. But do not be alarmed; it does not concern you. Would you mind leaving me alone for a while? I think I had better read these letters by myself.

Portia: You worry me, Brutus. It is not like you to be so secretive, but since you ask, I will go.



Brutus: Oh, my! All of these letters call for Caesar's death. Perhaps, Cassius is telling the truth, and this is what the people of Rome want. I must be resolute and act now to make sure that Caesar does not destroy our beloved Rome. I shudder to think of the actions that I must take, but I will take them for the good of Rome!

Portia: *(calling)* Brutus, I hear knocking again. Should I see who it is?

Brutus: No, do not bother, Portia. I will get it. Ah, Cassius, it is you.

Cassius: Yes, Brutus. I have urgent matters to discuss with you. Is Portia here? I do not want her involved.

Portia: *(calling)* Is that you I hear, Cassius?

Cassius: It is, Portia, but I must speak to Brutus alone, if you do not mind.

Portia: I understand, Cassius. I hope that you can help Brutus with whatever is troubling him. I will leave you both alone now.



Brutus: I have made a decision, Cassius. Although it makes me sick to harm Caesar, I will join you. I will do whatever it takes to keep Rome from becoming a dictatorship. I do not want the people of Rome to lose their voice.

Cassius: I am greatly relieved to hear this, Brutus, for throughout the night, I have gathered together many others who think as we do. They are waiting in your garden now, and we must go right away and plan our course of action with them.

Brutus: All right, let us go. What have your men planned thus far?

Cassius: We must lure Caesar from his house and kill him, but I think we have another problem to face as well. We must rid ourselves of Marc Antony, too, for he is faithful to Caesar and will try to stop us. I am certain that he is a great danger to our cause.

Brutus: No, Cassius, I disagree. We cannot drown ourselves in the blood of others. Marc Antony has done no harm to us or Rome.



Cassius: But, Brutus, I am afraid that you are not thinking clearly. Marc Antony is a loyal follower of Caesar, and if we do not get rid of him, we may not be able to carry out our plans.

Brutus: No, Cassius, I will never agree to this! We are here only to purge Caesar from our city, and nobody else. We cannot simply murder people we do not like. We are acting for the good of Rome and not merely for ourselves.

Cassius: Have you not noticed the violent weather this evening? These winds! The thunder and lightning! These are signs that Caesar is gaining too much power and must be stopped!

Brutus: Look, Portia is approaching now. You must leave immediately, for I do not want her to worry.

Portia: It is so late, my husband. Why are you standing here in the garden, cold and alone? There is a terrible storm brewing. Please come inside.

Brutus: In a moment, dear. You should not be out in this chilly air with your failing health. Please go inside and rest now.



Portia: What has come over you, my love? We have never been secretive with each other before. Please tell me what is bothering you.

Brutus: I am feeling somewhat poorly, my dear Portia. But, that is actually of little concern, even to me.

Portia: Brutus, I cannot stop thinking about the turmoil that seems to be consuming you right in front of my eyes. I beg you, please tell me what is wrong.

Brutus: Portia, please, go to bed.

Portia: I am your wife. I have stood by you in all you have done. Please do not leave me in the dark.

Brutus: You are a good wife, Portia. But you must go inside and rest now. I need time to think alone. I promise that I will reveal all to you later.



Act II, Scene I

A few days later at the home of Caesar

Marc Antony: Caesar, I have not seen you these last few days, so I have come to visit you at your home. Have you thought over my offer? It will be the fifteenth of March tomorrow, and all of Rome eagerly awaits your decision. We all want to celebrate your coronation tomorrow.

Julius Caesar: Yes, Marc Antony. I have decided to take you up on your offer to be king.

Marc Antony: That is wonderful news! I am glad to hear it!

Julius Caesar: But something here at my home is greatly disturbing me.

Marc Antony: What is it, Caesar?

Julius Caesar: When I told my wife, Calpurnia, about going tomorrow, she begged me not to. She was shrieking when she described her recent nightmares.

Marc Antony: And what exactly were these nightmares about?



Act II, Scene II

The next day in Caesar's home and on the way to the Senate

Julius Caesar: I still have an uneasy feeling about this day. What if Calpurnia is right and something happens? Ah, I hear knocking.

Brutus: Caesar, my friend. I am here to accompany you to the Senate.



Julius Caesar: Brutus, I am still not sure I should go. Something is gnawing at me. I have a deep fear in my soul.

Brutus: What is it, my friend?

Julius Caesar: I am disturbed by the frantic pleadings of my wife. I am also worried about the soothsayer's warning. Perhaps you should go to the Senate alone. You can tell them that I am ill.

Brutus: Nonsense, Caesar, do not be troubled by such insignificant things. Everything will happen as it should, as you soon shall see.

Julius Caesar: You are right, Brutus. My fears are unfounded. I will go to the Senate. I am ready to rule Rome.

Brutus: I hope this journey is not making you tired, Caesar. We are almost there.

Julius Caesar: Brutus, this journey seems longer today than ever before. Do you see all of those in the streets who seem desperate to speak to me? Maybe I should stop and see what they want.

Brutus: No, Caesar, there is no time. Do not give a thought to these men. Think only of Rome.



Julius Caesar: Wait, I recognize that man. What? You have a letter for me? Let me see it. Look, Brutus. This letter says that there is a conspiracy against me. Could it be true?

Brutus: I have not heard of any conspiracy. We must hurry, Caesar, for we do not want to be late.

Julius Caesar: And look, Brutus, that soothsayer is still yelling his warning, "Beware the Ides of March."

Brutus: Caesar, stop your worrying. Take joy in the thought that you will soon be king of Rome.

Julius Caesar: You are right, Brutus. I must think of Rome. My personal concerns must be my last priority.

Act II, Scene III

At the Senate

Cassius: Ah, look who has arrived. I bow to you, Caesar.

Julius Caesar: That is unnecessary, Cassius. You do not need to bow before me.

Cassius: Oh, I do, and I have something for you. It is my sword!



Julius Caesar: Ah! Why are you doing this? Ah, I can hardly breathe. I will not let you get away with this!

Cassius: Stop struggling!

Brutus: I have a sword for you, too, Caesar.

Julius Caesar: (*gasping*) Et tu, Brute? If you, who I thought was my trusted friend, is so against me, then I give up my struggle to live.

Cassius: Oh, happy day. Let us rejoice! Liberty and freedom are now here!

Brutus: We have done Caesar a favor. He will no longer fear death. Let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood.

Cassius: Look, here comes Marc Antony, and I am afraid he will be greatly disturbed by Caesar's death.

Marc Antony: Oh, mighty Caesar, do you lie so low? Are all of your conquests, glories, triumphs, and spoils shrunk to this tiny measure? Brutus, I only ask that if you intend to murder me as well, do it quickly and get it over with.



Brutus: Oh, Antony! Do not beg us to kill you. We may appear bloody and cruel, but our actions were for the good of Rome. We have no ill will against you. We receive you with love.

Marc Antony: I will shake your bloody hands then, but may I ask a simple favor? May I speak at Caesar's funeral?

Brutus: You may, Marc Antony.

Cassius: No, Brutus! Do not let him do it, for he may convince the people of Rome that we did something wrong.

Marc Antony: I will speak only of Caesar's greatness and will certainly temper my speech to ensure those listening that his passing is best for us all.

Brutus: Marc Antony, at this moment I must speak to the crowds of people who have gathered here. Tomorrow, we will both speak at Caesar's funeral.

Song: Sonnet 90



Act III, Scene I

Caesar's funeral at the Forum

Brutus: My good people, I know that the death of Caesar has been a great shock to you. But you must understand that his ambitions were to overtake us, to force us to live his way, and to stomp our will into the ground. If you were to ask me why I rose up violently against Caesar, I would simply state, it is not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Now, stay and listen to the words of Marc Antony.

Marc Antony: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is often buried with their bones. I do not come to disprove what Brutus has said. If Caesar was overly ambitious, he has certainly paid for it now, but was he so ambitious? We all know that I offered him the crown and that he took time to think. He wanted to consider what was best for us, not just for himself.

Brutus: *(whispering)* What is he doing?

Cassius: *(whispering)* I told you that it was not a good idea to let him speak to the people of Rome.



Marc Antony: Brutus would have you believe that Caesar wanted the crown only to bestow riches upon himself, but I have here in my possession Caesar's last will and testament. Caesar brought much wealth and glory to Rome, and in his will and testament, he gave a sum of money to every Roman citizen; and furthermore, he ordered that his private gardens be made public.

Brutus: *(whispering)* Cassius, you are right. He is swaying the crowd with his words.

Cassius: *(whispering)* What should we do?

Marc Antony: But I do not want to say too much, for I do not want you to think I am speaking ill of Brutus and Cassius, the honorable men who brutally stabbed Caesar to death.

Brutus: *(whispering)* Look, the crowd has turned against us, Cassius. I fear we will not live long!

Cassius: *(whispering)* There is no time to waste. We must flee the city as quickly as possible!



Act IV, Scene I

The outskirts of Rome

- Brutus:** Cassius, you deceived me in your plot against Caesar. I was persuaded by your words that all of Rome wished his death. That was a lie! And now, we are exiled from the city and have to fight for our lives.
- Cassius:** Do not blame me alone, Brutus, for you chose to believe me and to act as you did.
- Brutus:** You wanted Caesar dead because of jealousy. You endangered us all to get what you wanted. I murdered Caesar with the honest intention of saving the Rome I love!
- Cassius:** You rant and rave for nothing, for what is done is done! Now we must either agree to fight together against the tyranny of Marc Antony and Octavius or to part, here and now.
- Brutus:** I suppose you are right, Cassius. There is no use looking back now. Give me your hand for we must fight together to the end. I will use this battle to release my anger and grief over what happened to my wife, Portia.



- Cassius:** Why? What has happened to her?
- Brutus:** She is dead. I revealed our plan to her, and when everything went wrong and Marc Antony inspired hatred against us, she took us for lost and killed herself.
- Cassius:** I am sorry for your loss, Brutus, but we should get some much needed sleep now.
- Brutus:** I am tired but cannot sleep. Wait, what is that I hear? Cassius, do you hear that? Cassius? He has already fallen asleep. Oh no, I can not believe my eyes, for it is the ghost of Caesar! What is it you want? Speak to me, Ghost!
- Julius Caesar:** Brutus, you are an evil spirit!
- Brutus:** Why have you come here?
- Julius Caesar:** To warn you. Brutus, you will see me again sooner than you would like. You will see me again when you battle at Philippi.
- Brutus:** What does this mean? Where are you, Ghost? Cassius! Awake! I have something to tell you.



Act V, Scene I

Before the Battle of Philippi

- Marc Antony:** Octavius, thank you for coming so quickly to help fight the battle against the conspirators.
- Octavius:** I am ready to take command, Marc Antony.
- Marc Antony:** Good. Now, you will lead your army to the left side of the field, and I will ...
- Octavius:** No, *you* will lead *your* army to the left side of the field; I will go to the right side.
- Marc Antony:** I see you are already asserting your authority, as is your right, Octavius.
- Octavius:** I know how to command a battle, Marc Antony. Remember that I will soon take Caesar's place as heir to the throne.
- Marc Antony:** Look, I see Brutus and Cassius and their armies in the distance. They are approaching.
- Octavius:** Shall we give the sign of battle?
- Marc Antony:** No, we will answer on their charge.



- Octavius:** Men, stir not until the signal is given!
- Brutus:** Words before blows, countrymen?
- Octavius:** We know you love hitting before thinking, Brutus.
- Brutus:** Good words are better than bad strokes.
- Marc Antony:** In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words. Remember the hole you made in Caesar's heart while you cried, "Long live, Caesar! Hail, Caesar!"
- Cassius:** Marc Antony, your words are as sweet as honey.
- Marc Antony:** And you are the same old Cassius.
- Octavius:** Enough! Look, I draw my sword against conspirators, and I will not put it away until I have slaughtered all traitors or have died trying.
- Brutus:** The only way you will die by a traitor's sword is if you kill yourself.
- Octavius:** I hope you are right, because I was not born to die on your sword.



Brutus: Is that so, Octavius?

Octavius: Come, Marc Antony! If you dare to fight today, Brutus and Cassius, then come to the field, and if not, then come when you have the stomachs!

Act V, Scene II

The Battle of Philippi

Cassius: The battle is not going well. Many of my men are being killed, and others are quickly fleeing. Brutus's men are not performing well, either. All is lost, I fear, and there is nothing for me to do but have my faithful servant plunge this sword into my body. Here, servant, go ahead. Caesar, you win even from the grave, as I am now being killed by the same sword that I thrust into you.

Octavius: Marc Antony, the battle is going well. I hear that Cassius was so despaired that he asked his own servant to kill him.

Marc Antony: I have heard the same, Octavius.

Octavius: Have you any news of Brutus?

Marc Antony: No. Let us see if we can find him!



Brutus: Where can Cassius possibly be? Oh no, he is dead! I should have known when I saw Caesar's ghost last night that he wanted to thwart this battle. I know my hour has come, and I must have the courage to face my death and not force another hand to commit the act. I think I will find better peace in losing on this day than Marc Antony will find in winning. Caesar, you can rest peacefully and satisfied, as I will now die.

Octavius: Look, I see Brutus lying on the ground in the distance! We must go over there and see if he is still breathing.

Marc Antony: He is dead. Brutus is dead, and I feel no joy in it. Of all those who conspired against Caesar, he was the most honorable, for while the others acted out of malice and jealousy, Brutus followed his heart. He wanted only what he thought was best for Rome, and his death is a great loss to us all.

Octavius: Then we will let Brutus have an honorable burial. We will honor his death in Rome. Now, call the field to rest, and let's away, to part the glories of this happy day.

Poem: Sonnet 146



Sonnet 146

William Shakespeare

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
My sinful earth these rebel powers array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
 So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
 And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.



Sonnet 90

William Shakespeare



Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now,
Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss.
Ah, do not, when my heart hath scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow.
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come, so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might;
 And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
 Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.



Glossary

archrivals—the main people competing for the same object or goal as another

array—regular order or arrangement

brewing—forming

conspirators—people who agree to act together to do an unlawful act

coronation—the act or ceremony of crowning a king or queen

dictatorship—a government or country in which total power is held by a one person, a dictator

dross—waste or foreign matter

Ides—the fifteenth of March, May, July, or October or the thirteenth day of any other month in the ancient Roman calendar

inheritors—people who come in to or receive property, powers, or duties as an heir

purge—to make clean

reluctant—unwilling; struggling in opposition

republic—a government having a chief of state who is not a monarch

soothsayer—a person who claims to foretell events

spoils—stolen goods

thwart—to stand in the way of

Characters

Marc Antony: a friend of Caesar's

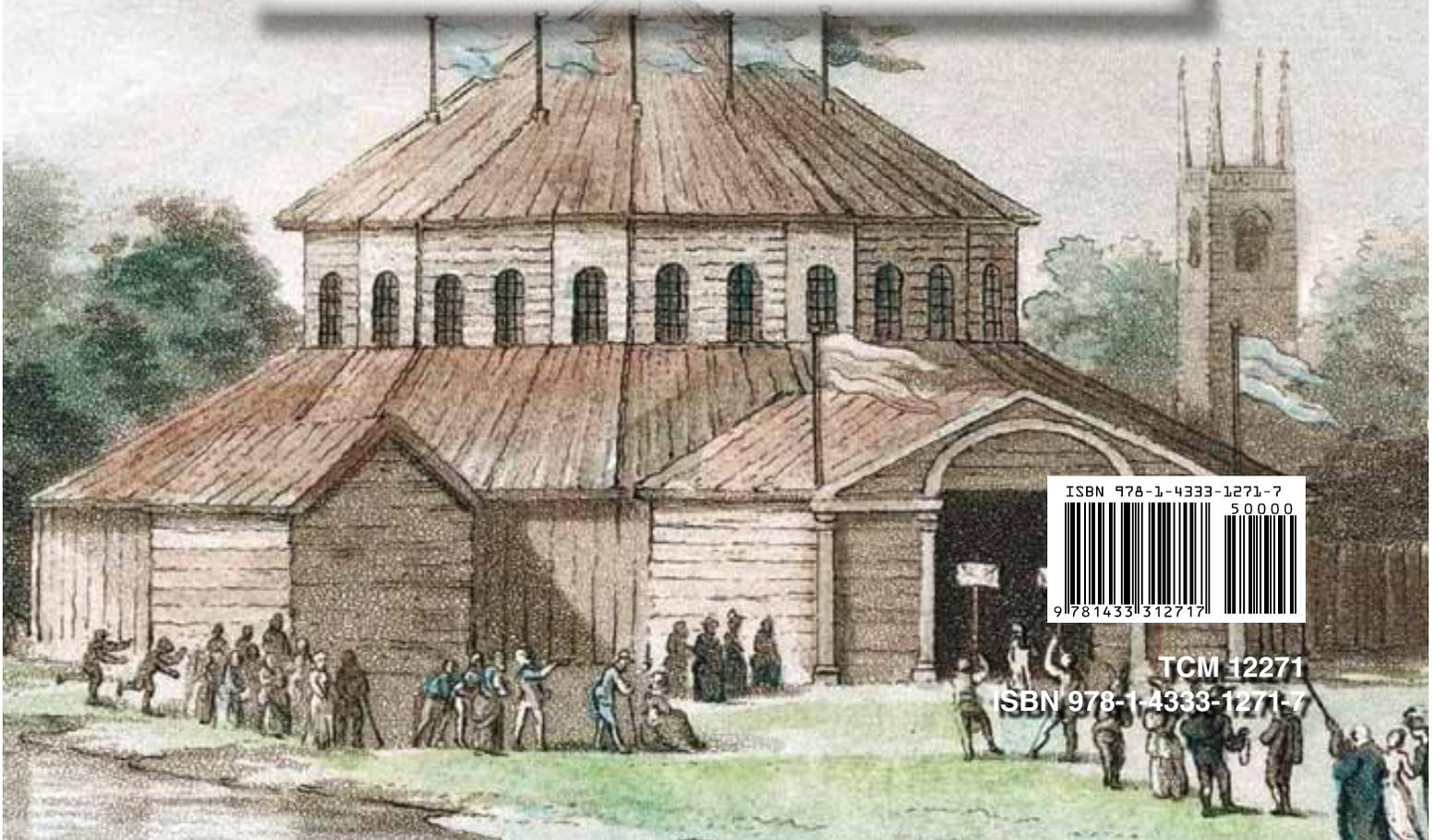
Julius Caesar: a Roman general and senator

Cassius: a Roman general

Brutus: a noble Roman

Portia: the wife of Brutus

Octavius: the adopted son of Julius Caesar



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