

# THE BALLAD OF JULIO CÉSAR

## By Ruth Buchanan

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## **SYNOPSIS**

FRIENDS! ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN! Have you ever wondered what would have happened had Julius Caesar NOT been killed when he was stabbed in the Roman Senate House in 44B.C., but instead fled to Mexico, where he has been hiding out for millennia before returning to exact his revenge? Who hasn't! Making use of violence and deception worthy only of a tyrannical dictator, Julio César gains control of an unsuspecting high school English class just as they're about to perform their own version of the Bard's classic tragedy. The students suddenly find themselves confronted with a substitute teacher the likes of which they've never seen before. You won't want to miss one second of this snarky, flavorful Shakespearian farce!

## **CHARACTERS**

*(17 roles: 6 males, 8 females, 3 either)*

JULIO CÉSAR (M)	Slightly-nutty Hispanic criminal mastermind who thinks he is Julius Caesar.
MISS PHIPS (F)	English teacher. Older and sweetly condescending.
INTERCOM (F)	Disembodied voice from offstage. A fussy, officious office worker.
CLARA (F)	Bossy student director of the in-class play.
NEW KID (F)	Eventually reads the part of Octavius Caesar in the in-class play. There is more to her than meets the eye.
SIMON (M)	Plays Julius Caesar in the in-class play. Smart, nerdy, a bit pompous.
MARY BETH (F)	Plays Calpurnia in the in-class play. Eager to please.
CARL (M)	Plays Brutus in the in-class play. Not overly bright.

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EMILY (F)	Plays Portia in the in-class play. Vaguely dissatisfied with Shakespeare. Has a special affection for Philip.
JESSE (M or F)	Plays Cassius in the in-class play. Smart, popular, and easygoing.
PHILIP (M)	Plays Casca in the in-class play. Slow on the uptake, but endearingly so.
MARK (M)	Plays Antony in the in-class play. A bit dim.
STACIE (F)	Plays Popilius Lena and reads Artemidorus in the in-class play. A snarky music lover.
RACHEL (F)	Doubles as a Servant, Lucilius, and The Soothsayer in the in-class play. Intelligent and slightly sarcastic.
SERGEANT JOHNSON (M or F)	First emergency responder. Professional and efficient.
POLICE OFFICERS (M or F)	Energetic and focused. (2 needed)

## **DURATION**

Approximately 50 minutes

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

### **SET**

The setting is the inside of a typical secondary English classroom. Student desks are set up at an angle, stage left. A large teacher's desk angled stage right, and a large chalkboard or whiteboard against the back wall, center stage. On the desk should be a large globe. On the board should be written the date (March 15), the teacher's name (Miss Phips) and some sort of homework assignment or announcements.

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Motivational posters and banners decorate the walls. There is only one entrance (classroom door, stage left). It's best if the door is an actual door rather than a curtain or sheet: that way, the police officers have something to kick in when they burst into the classroom in the last scene. Near the door, on the wall (stage left) is the intercom system. Next to the intercom system is a window through which the audience (and the teacher, if standing over by his desk) can see into the "hallway" of the school. There is one window with a view of the parking lot outside above the teacher's desk, stage right.

### **COSTUMES**

All students may wear school uniforms as their basic costumes, with each student (except the New Kid) to have togas in their backpacks to be slipped over their clothes mid-way through the first scene. If school uniforms are not available, jeans/slacks on the bottom and polo shirts or T-shirts on top work well.

A few characters have special wardrobe needs:

Julio César: Sombrero, Mexican poncho, stick-on mustache, tweed jacket, scar (or a large Band-Aid) on his neck.

Miss Phips: Grey wig, wire-rimmed glasses, skirt, blouse, sensible shoes, cardigan, cane.

Simon: Large-framed nerd glasses. Suspenders. Laurel wreath to wear when portraying Julius Caesar. Black cape (to be donned later).

Sergeant Johnson: White shirt, dark slacks, dress shoes, badge (clipped to belt), holster/gun, police hat.

Police Officers: Police uniforms, cuffs, nightstick, badges.

### **SOUND EFFECTS**

Explosion  
School bell  
Car alarm(s)  
Lockdown alarm

Mariachi music  
School intercom buzzer  
Music (see script)  
Helicopter

## **DIRECTOR NOTES**

Concerning the memorization of the Shakespeare lines: *The Ballad of Julio César* is intended to be presented as a play-within-a-play. The characters—most of them students in an English class—are acting out Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in class. With the exception of the character named The New Kid, beginning in Scene 2, all of the kids in the play are “reading” their Shakespeare lines out of a small playbook. How much of the Shakespeare they actually memorize, of course, is up to you as the director. A talented, hardworking cast can certainly memorize it all quite handily, as it's been pared down considerably. The students must still have playbooks in their hands, though, for the sake of the storyline. Your alternatives for what they hold as playbooks are as follows: 1) either cover your actual *Ballad of Julio César* playbooks on the night of the performance with covers reading *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, or 2) print some small, cheap paper scripts containing only the students' Shakespeare lines (recommended, as it will keep their heads up out of the scripts when they're not reading their Shakespeare lines). Either way, it's important that the words *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* appear in large block letters on the front of the students' playbooks because a few lines in the play have the students referring to the word *tragedy* on the cover.

The main character's name, Julio César, is pronounced thus: HOO-lee-oh SAY-zhar, preferably with a nice rolling *R* at the end. It's important to have students practice this from day one in order to avoid their getting his name mixed up with Julius Caesar's name and thus confusing themselves (and the audience) to no end.

Some notes on casting:

**Julio César** - It's important that the student chosen to play Julio César be able to at least fake a passable Spanish accent. Several times in the script, Julio César's line calls for a mighty rolling *R*, indicated by several *R*'s being added to the word. Be sure to check for both the accent and the ability to roll the *R* during tryouts. He also speaks some Spanish throughout the play. Be sure that he knows not only how to pronounce these words and phrases but also what they mean.

**The New Kid** - Whoever is chosen to play the New Kid must be able to memorize and perform large sections of Shakespearian dialogue believably. How much memorization the rest of the play-within-a-play is done by the other students is up to you, but the New Kid has

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all of his part memorized (it is revealed toward the end of the story that he/she has actually already performed this part before in community theatre). Be sure to cast someone who is capable of pulling this off believably.

**Jesse** – Although the character’s name is spelled in the masculine way, the part has been written to be gender flexible. Just adjust any pronouns accordingly if necessary. If you do cast a girl in the role (as I have done in the past – it works fine), feel free to spell it *Jessie* in the program.

**Simon** – This character is intended to be such a hardcore nerd that even his version of Julius Caesar (whom he plays in the in-class play) is nerdy. This creates a fun irony when the character of Julius Caesar has lines meant to be tyrannical and/or manly, and they come out with a nerdy twist.

A word on togas: Check the internet for simple instructions on how to make easy, slip-over-the-head togas that don’t require students to tie/fasten every time they’re taken on and off. We used a lightweight, non-wrinkling material that could be balled up and shoved into backpacks without damage. You don’t have to use white, either: we mixed in a few light pastels and greys and blended in some colored sashes on the ladies for aesthetic variety.

Concerning the “electric trigger” – at some point, Julio César uses a remote detonator to blow up a car (explosion offstage). Any small electronic device will work, such as a garage-door opener or an overhead projector remote. Just be sure he has the detonator in his pocket when he goes onstage in Scene 1.

As much as possible, I have attempted to preserve the integrity of Shakespeare’s original script; however, it was inevitable that some small sacrilege must needs have occurred. The only change I made about which I feel an actual qualm is that of giving a line to Brutus in Scene 3 that in the original play (*The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene 1) was spoken by a character named Cinna. Although Cinna’s character did not make the editorial cut into *The Ballad of Julio César*, I felt the need to keep this one line (instructing Casca to be the first to lift his hand and stab Caesar) and thus decided to give the line to Brutus. For this, I hope both you and Shakespeare will forgive me.

The slow-motion sequence in the last scene can be one of the highlights of the play! It’s important for you as the director to choreograph it well in

your mind before you start rehearsing it with the students. Give each student a clear path from Point A to Point B so that he knows where he's starting the scene, where he's to end his slow motion bit, and what exactly he's supposed to be doing in slow motion on the way from Point A to Point B. A few of the more athletic students will be able to trip, fall over, roll, get back up, and leap over desks, all while moving in slow motion. Those blessed with fewer fine motor skills should be given more straightforward instructions. More than any other bit of the play, blocking and rehearsing this part well will make or break the scene.

Several scenes call for Stacie's character to play music on her boom box. Be sure that you acquire the appropriate permissions if you choose to use licensed music.

Several of the students (Mark, Philip, Simon, and Julio) use lines that pay tribute to the movie *The Princess Bride*. The stage directions sometimes encourage the students to use their best "impersonation voice" when these lines are delivered. If your cast members have never seen this movie, recommend that they do so in order that they can properly mimic the lines.

Depending on the demographics of your audience, you may want to put a synopsis of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in the program or have one of the students read a blurb explaining the overarching story to the audience right before the performance.

## **PROPERTIES – PERSONAL**

Backpacks  
Remote "trigger" (see director's notes)  
2-4 plastic swords  
10 Playbooks (see director's notes)  
Desktop-sized globe  
Boom box  
Black cape  
"Taper" (electric candle is best)  
2 Laurel wreaths  
Water bottle  
Bullhorn

## THE BALLAD OF JULIO CÉSAR

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### SCENE 1

**At curtain: Class bell rings and student / hallway chatter is heard. JULIO enters wearing a Mexican poncho and sombrero. HE turns on the lights, glaring furiously at his surroundings. The school intercom buzzes.**

INTERCOM: Señor Julio César, please report to Room 128. Your senior-level Spanish class is waiting for their substitute. Señor Julio César, please report to Room 128. If you are in need of assistance in finding the room, please buzz the office. Again, if you are in need of assistance, please buzz the office.

JULIO CÉSAR: Bah.

MISS PHIPS: (*entering*) Why, Señor César! What a nice surprise. I didn't expect to see you—

JULIO CÉSAR: WHAT is the meaning of this? (*holding up a student copy of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.*)

MISS PHIPS: Oh, isn't it exciting? We're just about to get to Act III, where Caesar gets stabbed in the neck by his own senators in the senate house in Rome! I've been having the students act it out, you see, and they're very excited about today.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*rubbing his neck, disgusted*) Excited?

MISS PHIPS: Oh, yes. It's not every day they get to act out a murder, you see.

(*MISS PHIPS draws fake dagger from her purse. CÉSAR yelps and jumps back. MISS PHIPS sets it on the desk.*)

Oh, Poor Señor César! I didn't mean to frighten you! You know, I've heard what the other teachers have been saying about your time in Mexico, but I want you to know that I don't believe a bit of it.

JULIO CÉSAR: You... don't?

MISS PHIPS: No, not a word! If you really had been hiding out down in Mexico for some horrible crime, you wouldn't jump at the sight of a little toy knife, would you?

(*SHE brandishes knife again, and CÉSAR cringes.*)

Of course you wouldn't.

JULIO CÉSAR: Of course not! (*high, false laugh and adjusts moustache*)

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MISS PHIPS: Now, then. Was there something that you wanted?

JULIO CÉSAR: What I want, Señora, is to know if you plan to continue teaching this—this—*foolishness*.

MISS PHIPS: (*frostily*) Pardon me. Did you just refer to Shakespeare as... *foolishness*?

JULIO CÉSAR: I did.

MISS PHIPS: Would you mind telling me why?

JULIO CÉSAR: Look at this here: (*reading from script*)

“Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.”

MISS PHIPS: Well, yes. I hear nothing wrong with that.

JULIO CÉSAR: Nothing *wrong* with—You do not think, Señora, that some people... some, who are so *important*... so *needed*... so *influential*, that they do not die?

MISS PHIPS: Certainly, in a literary sense, that’s true. In his own way, Julius Caesar does live on.

JULIO CÉSAR: He does indeed (*grinning evilly*).

MISS PHIPS: All thanks to Shakespeare, of course.

JULIO CÉSAR: Eh, bah!

MISS PHIPS: Really, Señor César, is this necessary? I have a class in five minutes. And so do you, I suppose. When Principal Gunderson introduced you at the staff meeting this morning as our newest substitute, he didn’t mention—

JULIO CÉSAR: So, you admit that you intend to teach this... this... *basura!*

MISS PHIPS: If by that you mean do I intend to continue teaching William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, then yes. Yes, I do.

JULIO CÉSAR: I have think you might say that.

(*CÉSAR sighs dramatically. Pulls small electronic “remote trigger” device from his pocket and presses a button. EXPLOSION. CÉSAR and PHIPS rocked by blast. Car alarms can be heard in the parking lot.*)

MISS PHIPS: Goodness! What was *that*?

JULIO CÉSAR: Me, I do not know. (*Sly smile at audience and adjusts mustache.*)

INTERCOM: Miss Elaine Phips, please report to Parking Area C. Your car is on fire. Miss Elaine Phips, please report to Parking Area C. Your *car.... is on fire.*

MISS PHIPS: What!

*(MISS PHIPS exits, sharpish.)*

JULIO CÉSAR: And so it begin. Think they can re-write history, eh? Well, I'll show them. Me, I did not spen' all those years in Mexico for nothing. Hiding out? Bah! Julio César do not *hide!* Julio César face his enemies like a man! Well, except when they stab him in the neck. Then he go some place quiet to recover. Some place with lots of sun an' friendly people... an' tamales. *(removes poncho and sombrero to reveal toga and laurel underneath.)* Yes, is true. I am he. You know, Julio César: once the most noted conquistador in the entire Holy Roman Empire. Until they try to kill me, that is. Those men. Bah! Trebonius, Ligarius, Cimber, Cinna... and *BRRRRUTUS* *(pronounces name with emphasis on the rolling R)*. *BAH!* *(HE paces.)* For many year, I have plan. I will find him... the man who give me *this* *(displays scar on neck)*. I will walk up to him, and I will say: Hello. My name is Julio César. You stab me in the neck. Prepare to die. *(trill of mariachi music)* But, no. Sadly, I have wait too long. He escape me. They all escape me. They *die*. But Julio César? He have the last laugh. He outlive them *all*. He live to come back to correct the lies told about him *(holding up a copy of Shakespeare)* an' show once for all who is the real villain. *(School bell rings.)* Somehow it have come to this. All my planning. All my work. Years in Mexico, hiding out—I mean, being brave and manly and learning the Spanish. All part of my plan. They take my kingdom. They take my throne. They stab me in the neck! I am remember as one who cannot hold his power. *Que cosa mas grande!* Bah. I show them. I show them all. I come here as teacher, not for job, but for rrrrrvenge. *(trill of Mariachi music)*

*(STUDENTS—ALL but PHILIP—enter in riot of noise. ALL ad lib conversation. Snatches of conversations are heard rising above hubbub.)*

MARY BETH: —but I told him, you know, he couldn't, like, just treat me like that, because—

JESSE: What's up.

CARL: Another win last night.

JESSE: All season, dude.

MARY BETH: —wasn't fair, because Mom *always* sides with Allison even though I'm not the one who even started it this time—

JULIO CÉSAR: *(commanding)* Sit down.

*(ALL sit.)*

CLARA: Where's Miss Phips?

JESSE: Didn't you hear the intercom? Her car blew up. Or something.

ALL: (*ad lib*) Oh, no! What? I knew I heard something, etc.

CLARA: Oh my goodness, is she okay?

PHILIP: (*entering, making the most of his late entry*) FRIENDS!

ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN! (*a beat*) What's up.

ALL: Groans, etc.

PHILIP: I *love* that line.

SIMON: Oh. We know.

MARK: It's not even your line, you know.

PHILIP: It's not?

MARK: It's mine.

PHILIP: But, I thought—

SIMON: You *did*? Write this day down, everyone. Philip *thought*.

CLARA: Simon, don't be mean. Philip, we've been over this. You are playing *Casca*, the conspirator who stabs Caesar in the neck. *Carl's* the one who plays Brutus.

PHILIP: But, wait, Clara—

EMILY: (*soothingly*) You did read Mark's lines that yesterday, sweetie, but—

MARK: (*genuinely not getting it*) Was that because I was absent?

EMILY: (*kindly*) Yes, Mark.

SIMON: (*condescending*) Yes, Mark.

JULIO CÉSAR: Quiet, please.

MARY BETH: Oooo, it's that new Spanish teacher! Have you had a class with him yet? I heard he's hilarious. This morning during first period, somebody said that he didn't even know—

JULIO CÉSAR: Silence! Quiet! *Silencio!* Yes. Now, Miss Phips, she tell me she have teach you this—(*holds up the Shakespeare with two fingers*) an' that today you have come to the place where César, he have get stab in his neck.

PHILIP: Hope you're ready, Simon, 'cause today you're going down.

SIMON: Bring. It. On.

JULIO CÉSAR: 'Scuse me?

PHILIP: Well, Simon's Julius Caesar in the play. And I'm Casca. You know, "Speak hands, for me!" and all that? Yeah. So... You know. (*wiggles eyebrows and makes stabbing motions*)

JULIO CÉSAR: (*importantly*) Lady and Gen'lemen, I am here to tell you today that not everythin' in this—this *thing* is as it seem. This... this *Shaksprrrrr*— he no get it right. (*Assumes pedantic tone*) Mid' trrrrrrough the century *numero uno*, the mighty Julio César, he have gain control of all de Empire de Rome—

CLARA: Excuse me, um, Señor Julio? We're really glad that you're filling in for Miss Phips and all, what with her car exploding and her not being able to teach us today and all, but she may not have had

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time to tell you that, like, this is a student-led reenactment? We already spent two weeks studying the play with Miss Phips, and now we're just sort of acting it out.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*horrified*) Acting?

CLARA: Yes, and I'm the director.

ALL: (*ad lib*) Eye rolling, groans, etc.

CLARA: (*importantly*) Oh, and I also have to read Artemidorus today, because Aaron's absent. Oh, and some of the girls are reading guys' parts. So. You know. Don't let that throw you.

JULIO CÉSAR: But—but, *this*? This is no the real story!

CLARA: Oh, we know. Miss Phips told us all about the changes that Shakespeare made to the story. It's called dramatic license.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*horrified*) Dramatic license?

CLARA: (*interrupting*) Like the time and location of his death, and how he combined the battles for dramatic effect, and how Caesar never actually said "Et tu, Brute / Then fall Caesar!", but he really just pulled his toga over his head like a sissy when he saw Brutus in the crowd. You know.

JULIO CÉSAR: I *do* know. I know it *all*. And I—César—he was NOT a—

CLARA: But as I was saying, if we're going to finish the play today, we really have to be moving along. So if you don't mind—(*turns her back on a spluttering SEÑOR CÉSAR to address the class*) All right, everyone, get out your scripts and take your places for Act III, Scene 1: We're in Rome, mostly in the Senate house! Simon, put your book down and put on your toga, please.

(*STUDENTS pull togas on over their school clothes, pick up props, and shuffle into their places. JULIO CÉSAR is shunted to the side, trying to make himself heard over the hubub.*)

Caesar, you're about to encounter the Soothsayer and ignore his warnings for the third and final time.

JULIO CÉSAR: Eh? I'm 'bout to what?

CLARA: Um, *you* are about to see *Caesar*—played by Simon—

(*SIMON waves.*)

—get warned by the Soothsayer. It's a really famous part. "Beware the Ides of March!" You know? (*patronizingly*) I'm sure you've heard of it, sir.

RACHEL: Um, my line, people.

PHILIP: Are you sure? Because some people (*meaningful look at MARK*) seem to think that other people's lines are actually theirs. Or whatever.

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RACHEL: I'm pretty sure. I do get to say it three separate times. But Caesar ignores them all, so really, what's the point?

SIMON: What an idiot.

JULIO CÉSAR: Now, see here—

CLARA: Okay! Places, guys!

STACIE: I forget where we are.

MARK: FRIENDS! ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN! LEND ME YOUR—

STACIE: No, we didn't get that far. Did we? (*flipping through script*)

That's, like, all the way near the end.

PHILIP: Besides, that's *my* line.

MARK: Um, no it's not.

SIMON: Um, hello. Everyone? Act III, Scene 1.

MARK: Okay, whatever! I wasn't here yesterday, so...

PHILIP: Oh, yeah! And I read your part!

EMILY: (*kindly*) Yes, you did. Very good, Philip!

RACHEL: Oh, Yeah! And we've got that new kid...

JESSE: What new kid?

NEW KID: (*little wave*) Hey.

CLARA: Hi there. Okay. Um, have you ever studied *Julius Caesar*?

NEW KID: I—uh...

CLARA: Never mind. There's no time. Somebody throw her a script. And we'll have to bring her up to speed, so... Quick recap!

(*CLASS groans.*)

CLARA: Come on, do it! And keep it under a minute! Act II!

NEW KID: Um, really, that's okay. I—

CLARA: Okay, if you want to go ahead and sit down, now, sweetie, we're going to do a quick recap for you! It'll only take, like, a sec. Right, guys?

ALL: (*ad lib*) Groans, yeah right, whatever, etc.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*importantly*) Excuse me—

CLARA: Oh! There you are, sir. (*takes him by arm and forcibly drags him to the side*) You'll want to stay over here if you're going to be out of the way.

PHILIP: Um, hold up. What are we reviewing again?

SIMON: (*as if to a child*) Act. One.

CLARA: Come *on*, you guys! Caesar comes back from wars, the people offer him the crown three times, his wife bemoans her childless state and warns Caesar of her dream, Caesar ignores all warnings—

RACHEL: Including mine. All three of them.

CLARA: —Brutus joins the conspiracy, his wife Portia freaks out—

STACIE: Are you sure you even need us to do the recap, Clara? You seem to be doing a fine job of it all on your—

CLARA: Just do it!

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ALL: (*ad lib*) Fine! Okay! Whatever, etc.

CLARA: Act !! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaand, go!

SIMON / CAESAR: (*with fake enthusiasm*) I have returned!

ALL: (*also fake*) Yay! Huzzah! Etc.

MARY BETH / CALPURNIA: (*overly melodramatic*) I'm cursed. I can't have children.

SIMON / CAESAR: But it's probably my fault. Not that I'll admit it.

RACHEL / SOOTHSAYER: Beware the Ides of March!

SIMON / CAESAR: What man is that?

CARL / BRUTUS: A soothsayer bids you Beware the Ides of March!

SIMON / CAESAR: Set him before me; let me see his face.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar!

RACHEL / SOOTHSAYER: Beware the Ides of March!

(*CAESAR sweeps him aside with a gesture*)

ALL: (*shouting*) Huzzah! etc.

CARL / BRUTUS: What means this shouting? I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king!

JESSE / CASSIUS: Do you fear it?

CARL / BRUTUS: I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well. I love the name of honor more than I fear death.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I was born free as Caesar!

(*STACIE holds boom box over her head, hits "play," and blasts a pop song with freedom as its theme. Suddenly ALL STUDENTS dance about. THEY desist at a look from CLARA.*)

CLARA: Really, Stacie?

STACIE: (*innocently*) What?

CLARA: You know. Let's continue. Cassius, please repeat your line.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I was born free as Caesar!

ALL: (*shouting*) Huzzah, etc.

CARL / BRUTUS: Another general shout! I do believe that these applauses are for some new honors that are heaped on Caesar.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus.

(*CAESAR, having climbed upon a desk, strikes a superhero pose in the background.*)

Men at some time are the masters of their fates; the fault, dear Brutus, is not our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.

CARL / BRUTUS: Word.

(*CLARA clears throat meaningfully.*)

Um, I mean... I.... I should ask Casca... something?

PHILIP / CASCA: *(from his seat, glued to script)* Got it, dude.

*(Continues as CASCA)* They offered him the crown three times.

Then he fell down and foamed at the mouth.

CARL / BRUTUS: 'Tis very like. He hath the falling sickness.

*(Continues as CARL)* Ah... poor old Julius Caesar. Or, should I say, Julius Seizure.

MARY BETH: Nice.

CARL: Thanks. I worked it out last night.

MARY BETH: I like it.

CLARA: Carl! Mary Beth! Could you take this seriously please?

CARL: Serious as a heart attack, Clara.

MARK: Or a seizure.

*(MARK and CARL fist bump.)*

CLARA: You *guys*. This recap was only supposed to take a *minute*. Speed it up, please.

NEW KID: You know, it's okay. I really don't need—

CLARA: Um, we only have a sec, okay? So if you could sit down, please? And hold your comments until the end? That would be great. Thanks.

MARK: Where were we? Uhhh...

SIMON: *(getting EVERYONE back on track)* Cassius is gathering conspirators... Casca is paranoid...

CARL / BRUTUS: Oh! This is where I decide to betray Caesar...

*(suddenly dramatic)* O Rome, I make thee promise; if the redress will follow, thou receives thy full petition at the hands of Brutus!

RACHEL / LUCILIUS: It's the Ides of March, dude.

CARL / BRUTUS: Between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first motion, all the interim is like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.

JULIO CÉSAR: *(becoming agitated, can be heard muttering words like "traitor" and "imbicile" STUDENTS look at him.)* He will betray his friend, his comrade, his—

CLARA: Uh, Señor César, no offense, but we know, okay? Go ahead, Cassius.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I think it is not meet Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar, should outlive Caesar! Let Antony and Caesar fall together!

ALL: Aye!

CARL / BRUTUS: Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods!

ALL: Aye!

JULIO CÉSAR: *(simultaneous with the "Aye!")* No!

STACIE: Gross.

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JULIO CÉSAR: Ah, theses bloodthirsty men, how I hate them! (*ticking them off on his fingers*) Trebonius, Ligarius, Cimber, Cinna... and **BRRRRRRRRUTUS!**

CARL: (*little wave*) Hi.

JULIO CÉSAR: How can you, César's—I mean, Caesar's frien', of all people, betray him?

CARL: Um... It's in the script?

CLARA: Brutus gives his reasons in... um...

NEW KID: Act I.

CLARA: Oh, yes. Very good! You must be catching on! In Act I. Here, check it out. (*opens script and plunks it in front of CÉSAR's face*) Continue, please!

CARL / BRUTUS: (*snapping fingers*) Portia, you're on.

EMILY / PORTIA: (*overly dramatic*) My dear lord, / Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

CARL / BRUTUS: No. Go back to bed.

EMILY / PORTIA: (*falls to knees*) Tell me what's wrong!

CARL / BRUTUS: Get up, woman.

EMILY / PORTIA: If you loved me, you'd tell me!

CARL / BRUTUS: I'm not worthy of this noble wife.

EMILY: That's for sure (*getting up*). Women get seriously shortchanged in this play.

CARL: Actually...? Nobody cares.

MARK: You're off stage now. Scram.

EMILY: Whatever. Men.

STACIE, RACHEL, and MARY BETH: Men.

CLARA: Okay... Moving *on*. Meanwhile, at Caesar's...

MARY BETH / CALPURNIA: What mean you, Caesar? You shall not stir out of your house today!

SIMON / CAESAR: Caesar shall FORTH! (*superhero pose*)

MARY BETH / CALPURNIA: But, my dream!

SIMON / CAESAR: Caesar *shall* go forth!

MARY BETH / CALPURNIA: But, but... the comets! The statue spewing blood! But—

SIMON / CAESAR: Cowards die many times before their deaths! / The valiant never taste of death but once.

(*HE pushes her aside and strides "forth" dramatically while STACIE plays dramatic marching music reminiscent of the Star Wars "Imperial March."* **Important note: if you choose to use licensed music, you must obtain the necessary permissions and pay the appropriate fees.**)

CLARA: Can we cut the music, please? Seriously, whose idea was that?

STACIE: Um, mine?

CLARA: Well, it doesn't make any sense.

STACIE: Sure it does! "Caesar shall forth," you know? Like, he's going to march forth and force-choke a few people!

CLARA: Force ch—What are you even talking about?

MARK: (*horrified*) You mean, you don't *know*?

PHILIP: I knew she was a bad choice for director.

SIMON: Star Wars, Clara. It's been left in our trust as a cultural legacy! Many believe that Star Wars is *the* iconic film of our times.

MARK: Well, that or *The Princess Bride*.

SIMON: Fair enough.

CLARA: The Princa-who?

MARK: This... is so sad.

PHILIP: How do you suppose she got this way?

MARK: Poor parenting, I'd say.

SIMON: I'm beginning to question the integrity of your preparations as a director, Clara.

CLARA: Mark. Philip. Simon. Stacie. I don't know what you're talking about, but I want you to *put that boom box down* and get on with the production. Now.

STACIE: Okay, Clara. Whatever you say. (*Winks at class.*)

CLARA: Oops! I'm supposed to read this part. But I can't read and direct, too. Um, Stacie, make yourself useful.

STACIE / ARTEMIDORUS: (*getting up*) I'd hate for my talents to go to waste. (*Continues as ARTEMIDORUS*): Oops! Time to send Caesar his warning about the conspirators. (*texting*) Caesar, TRUST NO ONE. XOXO, Arty. Send.

SIMON / CAESAR: (*phone goes off*) Ah! (*reads it*) Nice. (*typing*) Forward to—

CLARA: (*sarcastic*) Oh, ha ha. Your clever little anachronisms are just too funny.

EMILY / PORTIA: Meanwhile, back at Brutus's house... I'm freaking out, contemplating how weak the heart of woman is, and getting ready to snack on some hot coals from the fireplace.

MARY BETH: Gross!

JULIO CÉSAR: Ah, poor, beautiful Portia!

EMILY: I know! It's sad, right? Shakespeare really had it in for the women in this play, didn't he.

SIMON: Actually, this is a *history*, so I don't think he had much control over the actual events.

JULIO CÉSAR: Is *no* history! Is cheap *forgery*! This Shakesparr, he—

CLARA: He's improved it, if you ask me.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*looking apoplectic*) He *whaaaat*?

RACHEL: He didn't improve it much, if you ask me.

EMILY: I agree. He could have made this a little less depressing. And have given the women better lines and less horrifying deaths. You know. And stuff.

SIMON: Well... you're right, but that would have made it a little less of a... you know.... (*points to the front of the play script*) Tragedy.

CLARA: You guys! What does *one minute review* mean to you? At this rate, the new kid will never find out what happens in the end.

NEW KID: Um, actually—

CLARA: It's okay. I have it all under control. You'll find out soon how it all works out. Now, then. Oh, wait! Great! We're at ACT III!

Places, everyone! Places, please! The show must go on!

PHILIP: FRIENDS! ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN! LEND ME YOUR—

ALL: (*ad lib*) Not yet! PHILIP! Not again, etc.

CLARA: Philip, for goodness' sake. We're not there yet. And it's not even your line!

PHILIP: Man... But it's my *favorite line!*

ALL: (*ad lib*) We know, ugh, etc.

## SCENE 2

JULIO CÉSAR: Now see here, *niños*. You must understand. Julio César... I mean Julius Caesar, he—

CLARA: Sorry, sir, but we really have to be getting on with it. We've finally caught up to where we left off yesterday. If you wouldn't mind— (*SHE taps him lightly and a chair right behind him catches him in the knees, causing him to sit down hard. SHE turns her back to him, effectively blocking his view of the proceedings.*) Go ahead, guys.

JULIO CÉSAR: Now, see here—

(*CLARA shushes him.*)

SIMON / CAESAR: The Ides of March are come. (*pushing up glasses*)

RACHEL / SOOTHSAYER: Ay, Caesar; but not gone.

STACIE / ARTEMIDORUS: Hail, Caesar! Read this schedule.

CARL / BRUTUS: Or' read, at your best leisure, this humble suit.

STACIE / ARTEMIDORUS: O Caesar; read mine first; for mine's a suit that touches Caesar nearer: read it, great Caesar.

SIMON / CAESAR: What touches us ourself shall be last served.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*peeking around CLARA*) WHAT?! César, he have never say this.

(*CLARA turns and engages him in heated, whispered argument—too quietly for the audience to fully overhear—while action continues.*)

STACIE / ARTEMIDORUS: Delay not, Caesar; read it instantly.

SIMON / CAESAR: What, is the fellow mad?

JESSE / CASSIUS: What, urge you your petitions in the street? Come to the Capitol.

CLARA: (*turning back on JULIO, moving to side so that HE is in view again*) Now, they all go into the Senate House following Caesar.

(*ALL take three giant steps forward to depict moving to the Capitol.*)

JULIO CÉSAR: (*proudly*) Si, they follow me because me? I am leader.

SIMON: (*slowly*) You mean... I'm the leader. They follow *me* because *I'm* the leader.

MARK: You know you're not really Julius Caesar, right, Simon?

JULIO CÉSAR: Ah-ha! No! 'Dis boy, he is *no* the Caesar. He is *imposter!*

MARK: Um, actually, it's called *acting*. So... we all know he's not really Julius Caesar. And I'm not really Marcus Antonious—

RACHEL: Although your name *is* Mark.

MARK: Although my name is Mark.

SIMON: Why is everyone at this school so weird?

CLARA: We really don't have time for this, guys. Now, then. Who's playing Popilius?

MARK: Stacie is.

CLARA: Stacie, where are you?

STACIE: Here.

CLARA: Well, get out here and read your line.

STACIE: Do they have to call me Popilius, though?

SIMON: It's not the worse name in this story, actually.

JULIO CÉSAR: Is no?

JESSE: Right, but Aaron's absent today. Who's going to read his part?

NEW KID: (*interested*) Who is Aaron playing?

JESSE: Aaron is... Publius.

(*General snickers.*)

CLARA: Come on, now, everybody. Let's grow up.

SIMON: Clara's right. We don't have time. Besides, Aaron's role isn't important in these acts. We can just skip over his lines.

NEW KID: You know, if you guys want, I can—

CLARA: Um, no, sweetie, it's okay. This will save time. Now go ahead with Popilius's lines, Stacie.

PHILIP: Actually, I was thinking that we could call her "Popsie."

MARK: Did you say *POOP-sie*?

PHILIP: POP-sie!

CLARA: You *guys!*

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ALL: FINE.

CLARA: Now say the line.

STACIE / POPILIUS: (*over it*) I wish your enterprise today may thrive.

JESSE / CASSIUS: What enterprise... Popsie?

PHILIP: It's *Popsie!*

CLARA: It's *POPILIUS!* Now go stand over by Caesar, Popilius. There.

CARL / BRUTUS: What said Popilius?

JESSE / CASSIUS: He—

(*STACIE clears her throat.*)

—um, *she* wished to-day our enterprise might thrive. I fear our purpose may be discovered.

CARL / BRUTUS: Look how he makes to Caesar: *mark* him.

MARK: Huh? What happened?

EMILY: You poor thing.

MARK: What?

CLARA: Keep going, guys.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Casca, be sudden, for we fear prevention! Brutus, what shall be done? If this be known, Cassius or Caesar never shall turn back, for I will slay myself.

JULIO CÉSAR: Eh? What's this?

CLARA: Oh, don't worry, *Señor* Julio. Cassius won't really kill himself.

He's just being all dramatic because he's afraid of getting caught.

Brutus is about to tell him to man up. Aren't you, Brutus?

CARL / BRUTUS: Cassius, be constant: Popilius Lena speaks not of our purposes (*as CARL:*) Wait... does this say *purposes* or *porpoises*?

SIMON: You're kidding, right?

CARL: Maybe?

CLARA: It says *purposes*, Carl. Now quit messing around!

CARL / BRUTUS: Cassius, be constant: Popilius Lena speaks not of our porpoises. For, look, he smiles, and Caesar doth not change.

(*STACIE gives SIMON / CAESAR an evil, creepy smile. HE shudders.*)

JESSE / CASSIUS: Trebonius knows his time; for, look you, Brutus. He draws Mark Antony out of the way!

CLARA: Okay, you two exit.

JULIO CÉSAR: Ah, Antony! My frien'. If only had we known!

CLARA: Um, sir, are you okay?

JULIO CÉSAR: (*rests head in hands*) Ah, me!

CLARA: (*eyebrows up*) Okay... (*makes "carry on" motion to the class, which continues*)

CARL / BRUTUS: Casca, you are the first that rears up your hand.

SIMON / CAESAR: Are we all ready?

JULIO CÉSAR: (*head coming up*) *Eieiei!* They ready. They ready for murder!

CLARA: Um, sir?

CARL: Dude, let go of my hand *right now*.

SIMON: But it's in the script, see?

JULIO CÉSAR: Poor Caesar! He only work for the good of Rome, and theses men...

CARL: Seriously, man, cut it out.

SIMON: But you're supposed to kiss my hand!

CARL: Don't even play.

CLARA: Guys! Stop! Um, Senior Julio, I could really use some help about now? These guys are—

JULIO CÉSAR: Help!? Help!? *You* need the help! What about poor Caesar!

SIMON: Yeah! I could use some help about now. (*Situation with CARL has deteriorated into hand-slapping.*)

CLARA: You guys!

ALL: (*ad lib*) Oh, come on! Just do it, etc.

SIMON: Fine.

CARL: Fine!

PHILIP: Fine.

(*ALL look at him.*)

What?

CARL / BRUTUS: (*holds SIMON's hand with two fingers*) I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar, (*waves SIMON / CAESAR's hand somewhere in the general vicinity of his lips; a knowing "a ha" is heard from JULIO*) desiring thee that Cimber may have an immediate freedom of repeal.

SIMON / CAESAR: What, Brutus!

JESSE / CASSIUS: Pardon, Caesar; Caesar, pardon!

SIMON / CAESAR: Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?

CARL / BRUTUS: Great Caesar,—

(*JULIO CÉSAR becomes increasingly agitated, moaning and biting his nails. CLARA eyes him beadily.*)

SIMON / CAESAR: Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?

PHILIP / CASCA: Speak, hands for me!

(*CASCA first, then the other CONSPIRATORS and BRUTUS stab SIMON / CAESAR. JULIO CÉSAR comes to his feet, eyes glazed with horror.*)

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SIMON / CAESAR: Ettu, Brute! Then fall, Caesar. (*Continues as SIMON*): Ow, guys, watch the ribs!

(*SIMON continues to complain while JULIO falls to the floor in a dead faint.*)

PHILIP / CASCA: Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets.

SIMON: I think I'm going to bruise.

(*STACIE plays celebratory song while CONSPIRATORS conga-line around the "dead" SIMON / CAESAR's body. NOBODY notices JULIO CÉSAR.*)

CLARA: Stacie! What did I tell you!

STACIE: Whoops! Sorry, Clara! Forgot! (*winks*)

JESSE / CASSIUS: Some to the common pulpits, and cry out 'Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement!'

NEW KID: (*having noticed JULIO CÉSAR's recumbent form*) Uh, you guys...

CLARA: I'll get to your question in a minute, okay? This is actually a really important part.

CARL / BRUTUS: People and senators, be not affrighted; Fly not; stand stiff: ambition's debt is paid.

NEW KID: (*coming forward*) You guys—

PHILIP / CASCA: Go to the pulpit, Brutus. (*Continues as PHILIP, to the NEW KID*) Excuse us.

CARL / BRUTUS: Where's Publius?

PHILIP: I thought we already established this. He's absent.

SIMON: It's the next line, genius.

CARL / BRUTUS: (*repeating the line*) Where's Publius?

PHILIP: Seriously guys. He's ABSENT.

RACHEL: Philip, just be quiet.

NEW KID: You guys.

ALL: What?

NEW KID: Look.

CLARA: Dude! *Señor Julio! Señor Julio!* Are you okay? Can you hear me?

JESSE: Somebody call the office!

(*MARY BETH presses the intercom button.*)

INTERCOM: Office.

MARY BETH: Hello, this is Miss Phips's English class in Room 342!

INTERCOM: I'm sorry, Miss Phips is occupied at the moment. Perhaps you are unaware that—

MARY BETH: Right, her car. We know, it's just that our substitute—

INTERCOM: —hasn't arrived? Principal Gunderson is well aware, young lady. He's on his way now to rectify the situation. Until then you're just going to have to hang tight.

MARY BETH: Right, um, okay—but—?

INTERCOM: Have somebody do a review until he gets there. (*sirens heard in background*) Oh, you'll have to excuse me. (*voice goes dreamy*) It's the firemen.

MARY BETH: Yes, but—hello? (*non plussed*) I think she hung up on me.

EMILY: Understandable.

MARY BETH: Completely! (*dreamy voice*) Firemen....

RACHEL: (*unimpressed*) Seriously?

MARY BETH and EMILY: What?

CLARA: You guys! What should we do? He's really out!

PHILIP: Does anybody know mouth to mouth?

MARK: Don't look at me!

CLARA: Don't be ridiculous, you guys! He's breathing! He's just passed out or something.

JESSE: Does anybody have a cup of water to throw on him?

MARK: Works in the movies.

SIMON: (*withering*) Yes, because everything that works in the movies actually works in real life.

EMILY: I have a Snapple in my purse.

CARL: I have Gatorade. Which is in my gym bag... which is in the car...

SIMON: You're a big help. You know that?

NEW KID: Here. (*proffers bottled water*)

CLARA: Thanks. (*hesitates*) Okay, then, so I just...

JESSE: Go ahead.

CLARA: Should I really just pour it on him? I don't know, like, he may just be a substitute, but he's a teacher! I don't want to get in trouble!

SIMON: Oh, for goodness' sake. (*stomps over and snatches the water, sloshing some in CÉSAR's face*) There.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*bolts up*) CAESAR SHALL FORTH! (*groans and subsides*) *Que cosa mas grande!* (*continues muttering in Spanish*)

SIMON: I think it worked.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*coming suddenly to feet, menacing class*) TRAITORS! COWARDS! DOGS!

CLARA: Um, sir...? Señor Caesar?

JULIO CÉSAR: (*points to CARL*) I shall see THEE at PHILIPPI!

CLARA: Um, sir, I love your energy but we're not to that part yet.

JULIO CÉSAR: You... you... you not to that *part* yet?

CLARA: We're just at the part where Caesar gets stabbed in the Senate House.

PHILIP: Actually, he gets stabbed in the neck. (*a beat*) By me.

CARL: By me, too.

JULIO CÉSAR: *Usted también, Bruto? Eieiei!*

CARL: Um... okay.

CLARA: (*awkward pause*) Mr. César, um, sir? Let us get you to a chair.

JULIO CÉSAR: But... I did not die.

JESSE: (*concerned*) Of course you didn't. You just passed out. Or hit your head.

PHILIP: Or something.

JULIO CÉSAR: But I *did not die*.

PHILIP: We covered this.

JESSE: Come on, guys. Let's help him sit down.

JULIO CÉSAR: (*bitterly*) Oh, *si*. Help. You all want to HELP. Because ev'one in my life so *helpful*.

JESSE: Ooooookay. Maybe we should just wait for Principal Gunderson to get here.

CLARA: But there's no time! Class lets out in, like, twenty minutes! And we're only in Act III!

JESSE: (*mockingly*) Oh *yes*. Because obviously that's the most important thing going on right now.

NEW KID: You know, back off.

(*General gasp from class.*)

She's just doing her best.

JESSE: Oh! Looks like Clara's got herself an assistant! The new kid must have her eye on a shot at the director's chair.

NEW KID: Beats sitting in the back.

CLARA: (*condescendingly*) Really, um, it's okay. I know that it's your first day and you haven't read the play before and everything, so I wouldn't want to make you feel like you had to—

NEW KID: It's no trouble. Okay. Caesar is dead, and the populace is about to start rioting over it. You (*points at BRUTUS*) were about to give a really gory speech encouraging Romans to bathe in Caesar's blood and go stomping about the marketplace celebrating.

(*JULIO CÉSAR blanches and puts a hand over his eyes, groaning.*)

Antony, you're about to pretend to submit to the conspirators, but really you're just trying to get Brutus to allow you to address the populace at Caesar's funeral.

CLARA: Well! Now... see...

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NEW KID: And we might as well skip to Antony's stirring speech at the end of Act III, Scene 1, since we've lost so much time over Señor César's, um, fall. (*looks around at EVERYONE staring at her*)  
What? I never said I hadn't read the play before.

SIMON: I think I love you.

MARY BETH: Hey!

SIMON: Sorry, Calpernia.

NEW KID: Thanks. Hey, my name's—

CLARA: Now, hold it. I don't think—

MARY BETH: Come on, Clara, who's wasting time now?

CLARA: Fine.

MARY BETH: Fine.

NEW KID: Fine.

PHILIP: Fine!

(*ALL look at him.*)

What?

JESSE: Dude. Come on.

PHILIP: What'd I do?

CLARA: Fine. Start Antony's speech.

NEW KID: Caesar, you're dead. You should be on the floor.

JULIO CÉSAR: I—I... am?

MARK: Do you think he hit his head or something?

NEW KID: Not you, sir. I mean— (*gestures at SIMON*)

SIMON: (*wave and smarmy smile*) Simon.

NEW KID: Simon. Julius Caesar. Right. Go ahead.

MARK: It's actually my line.

CLARA: Well, why don't you just go ahead, then!

CARL / BRUTUS: Welcome, Mark Antony.

MARK / ANTONY: (*overly dramatic*) O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low? Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

CARL / BRUTUS: O Antony, beg not your death of us. To you our swords have leaden points, Mark Antony: Our arms, in strength of malice, and our hearts of brothers' temper, do receive you in with all kind love, good thoughts, and reverence.

CLARA: Brutus is assuring Antony that they don't mean him any harm even though Antony was a loyal friend of Caesar's.

NEW KID: Um, yeah. I think I got that.

CLARA: (*Fake sweetness*) Oh, good for you.

CARL / BRUTUS: Only be patient till we have appeased the multitude, beside themselves with fear, and then we will deliver you the cause, why I, that did love Caesar when I struck him, have thus proceeded.

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*(During the following speech by ANTONY, POLICEMEN can be seen—through the classroom window—organizing a search in the hallway. The STUDENTS do not notice, but JULIO does. Sounds of search helicopters are also heard from time to time. STUDENTS will hear these and look up as they pass over, puzzled.)*

MARK / ANTONY: I doubt not of your wisdom. Let each man render me his bloody hand: ...*(shakes hands with CARL / BRUTUS)* Gentlemen all, --alas, what shall I say? My credit now stands on such slippery ground, that one of two bad ways you must conceit me, either a coward or a flatterer.

*(POLICE pass by the door. CÉSAR dons his sombrero and pulls it down over his face.)*

That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true: If then thy spirit look upon us now, shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death, to see thy Anthony making his peace, shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes (most noble!) in the presence of thy corpse? Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds, weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood, it would become me better than to close in terms of friendship with thine enemies.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I blame you—

MARK: Wait! I'm not done!

JESSE: You're not done yet?

MARK: It's my favorite monologue! And it's sort of a long one.

PHILIP: *(in best impersonation voice)* Skip to the end!

CLARA: *(not getting it)* We're not skipping anything! Continue, Mark.

ANTONY: Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bay'd, brave hart; here didst thou fall; and here thy hunters stand, sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy lethe. O world, thou wast the forest to this hart; and this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee. How like a deer, stricken by many princes, dost thou here lie!

CLARA: He's using hunting metaphors.

NEW KID: Got it.

JESSE: Now?

MARK: Yes, now.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I blame you not for praising Caesar so; but what compact mean you to have with us? Will you be prick'd in number of our friends; or shall we on, and not depend on you?

MARK / ANTONY: Friends am I with you all and love you all, upon this hope, that you shall give me reasons why and wherein Caesar was dangerous.

CARL / BRUTUS: Or else were this a savage spectacle: our reasons are so full of good regard that were you, Antony, the son of Caesar, you should be satisfied.

*(Helicopter is heard overhead. CÉSAR slinks down behind the teacher's desk and hides in the knee-hole, unnoticed by the STUDENTS.)*

MARK / ANTONY: That's all I seek: and am moreover suitor that I may produce his body to the market-place; and in the pulpit, as becomes a friend, speak in the order of his funeral.

CARL / BRUTUS: You shall, Mark Antony.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Brutus, a word with you. *(Aside to BRUTUS)* You know not what you do: do not consent that Antony speak in his funeral: know you how much the people may be moved by that which he will utter?

CARL / BRUTUS: By your pardon; I will myself into the pulpit first, and show the reason of our Caesar's death: what Antony shall speak, I will protest he speaks by leave and by permission.

JESSE / CASSIUS: I know not what may fall; I like it not.

CARL / BRUTUS: Mark Antony, here, take you Caesar's body. You shall not in your funeral speech blame us.

MARK / ANTONY: Be it so. I do desire no more.

CARL / BRUTUS: Prepare the body then, and follow us.

*(Exit ALL but ANTONY.)*

MARK / ANTONY: *(kneeling behind CAESAR's body, very dramatic.)* O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers! Thou art the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times.

*(CÉSAR emerges and nervously perches on edge of teacher's desk, looking dazed and out of it, twitchy-eyed, and nervous.)*

CLARA: Why did you stop?

MARK / ANTONY: I'm sorry, but... You're supposed to be dead. Are you *texting*?

SIMON: I'm changing my status... *(chuckling nerdily)* to "deceased."  
*(winks at NEW KID)*

CLARA: Seriously, Simon? *Seriously?*

SIMON: Okay, okay. No, not really. My mom would never get it. I'm checking the news. I've got to do *something* while I'm lying here. And actually, did you guys know that this morning there was a breakout from—

*(CÉSAR dives back behind desk, unnoticed.)*

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MARK: (*raising hand*) Excuse me... I'm doing my big monologue here?  
Emotions and stuff? I worked on this really hard.

MARY BETH: (*skeptically*) You did?

MARK: Is that so surprising?

RACHEL: Um... yes?

SIMON: Sorry. Excuse me, guys. I guess I'll just—(*collapses back into death*)

MARK / ANTONY: Thanks, man. (*continues as ANTONY*) Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood! Over thy wounds now do I prophesy—

(*POLICE are seen going by the door. CÉSAR, who had just emerged from behind desk, dips down behind CLARA, who doesn't notice him hiding behind her.*)

Blood and destruction shall be so in use and dreadful objects so familiar that mothers shall but smile when they behold their infants quarter'd with the hands of war; all pity choked with custom of fell deeds: and Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge, shall in these confines with a monarch's voice (*prepares himself for big line*) cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war!

(*ALL ad lib whooping and clapping. MARK takes a bow. CÉSAR slinks back to his position of sitting on the desk. SIMON sits up to clap, but falls back at a glare from CLARA.*)

RACHEL: You know... for a second there, you actually sounded like you know what you're talking about.

MARK: Thank you.

CARL: Dude. Don't thank her.

MARK: Eh?

CARL: Never mind.

RACHEL: Are you guys ready for me, or what?

PHILIP: Rachel? You're in this scene, too? (*frantically flips through script*)

MARK / ANTONY: (*to RACHEL / SERVANT*) You serve Octavius Caesar, do you not?

PHILIP: (*still working on it*) Wait, isn't Rachel the Soothsayer?

NEW KID: She's doub—

CLARA: —doubling! She's doubling as both. (*looks smugly at NEW KID, who just shrugs*)

NEW KID: Pretty common in a Shakespeare.

CLARA: Common. Exactly.

NEW KID: Just like in *Hamlet*, where the actor who plays Polonius usually doubles as one of the Gravediggers. Or in Henry IV Part

One, where the same actor who plays one of the main characters, like Hotspur, might double as a monk or an errand boy in a later scene.

CLARA: A later scene. Right, and—

SIMON: Seriously. Who are you?

NEW KID: I'm—

JESSE: Um, excuse me? I thought we were under a time crunch here?

CLARA: Exactly! Carry on.

*(Helicopter is heard going over. CÉSAR bends at the waist and hides his face between his knees, moaning in fear.)*

NEW KID: Um, are we sure he's okay?

EMILY: I have some ibuprofen in my bag, I think—

CLARA: Guys! *(snapping for ACTORS to continue)*

MARK / ANTONY: You serve Octavius Caesar, do you not?

RACHEL / SERVANT: I do, Mark Antony.

MARK / ANTONY: Caesar did write for him to come to Rome.

RACHEL / SERVANT: He did receive his letters, and is coming; And bid me say to you by word of mouth— *(finally notices JULIUS CAESAR / SIMON's body)* O Caesar!— *(SIMON waves from the floor)*

JULIO CÉSAR: *(lifting head at this)* Ah! Poor César!

EMILY: Sir? Do you need some pain reliever or something? Here, I've got—

CLARA: Shhhh!

MARK / ANTONY: Thy heart is big, get thee apart and weep. Is thy master coming?

RACHEL / SERVANT: He lies to-night within seven leagues of Rome.

MARK / ANTONY: Post back with speed, and tell him what hath chanced: here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome, no Rome of safety for Octavius yet. Lend me your hand.

*(THEY try to lift SIMON / CAESAR's body. PHILIP hops in to help.)*

SIMON: *(in best impersonation voice)* Gently... gently...!

CLARA: *(aside)* So, Octavius Caesar, the grandnephew and heir, is just a few leagues away. Antony plans to join him if he can.

NEW KID: I got it.

CLARA: Because he's just pretending to be on board with conspirators.

NEW KID: Really. I got it.

CLARA: Because—

NEW KID: Just drop it.

MARK: If you say so.

*(THEY drop JULIUS CAESAR / SIMON to the floor.)*

SIMON: GENTLY!—OW!

JULIO CÉSAR: Respec'! Show respec' for m—for—for Julius Caesar's poor body!

SIMON: Yeah! Thanks, Señor César.

JESSE: But why?

PHILIP: Yeah! Why! I mean... Why what?

JESSE: Why show respect to Caesar?

JULIO CÉSAR: (*bolting up dramatically*) 'Scuse me? César es a hero!

EMILY: Well *that's* debatable.

NEW KID: (*nodding*) When it comes to sorting out the heroes and villains, this one's a challenge. Actually, isn't the entire question inherent in Shakespeare's version of *Julius Caesar* the ethics of stopping a tyrant? He shows that matching treachery with treachery merely leads the characters even deeper into the darkness.

MARK: Okay. What, now?

CLARA: Really, you guys—

STACIE: Let me guess. We don't have time for this.

NEW KID: We really don't, unfortunately. The show must go on.

PHILIP: FRIENDS! ROMANS! COUNTRYMEN—

ALL: (*ad lib*) Not now, Philip! Groans, etc.

### **SCENE 3**

PHILIP: Wait, okay. So... what you're telling me is that the play's not over?

RACHEL: You have *got* to be kidding me.

PHILIP: What? I mean, the play's called *Julius Caesar*, right? How can the show go on without the main character?

JESSE: Philip. You are unbelievable.

PHILIP: What?!

JESSE: Were you or were you not here last week when we read through this entire play?

SIMON: (*nerdily*) He must have been here. Because he wasn't all *there*.

JESSE: I mean seriously, dude. Pay attention.

PHILIP: (*pause*) ...To what?

STACIE: You might as well give up.

EMILY: It's okay, Philip. Come over here and I'll show you where we are in the script.

CLARA: Thanks, Emily. and good luck with that. Okay. Here we are. Act IV! Antony and Octavius are plotting to combine forces against Cassius and Brutus. (*Long pause.*) Who's Octavius Caesar?

MARY BETH: You mean you don't *know*?

NEW KID: (*copying CLARA's condescending tone*) He's Caesar's nephew. He takes the title Caesar once Julius Caesar is dead.

JULIO CÉSAR: But, but, but—I did not die!

PHILIP: Here we go.

CLARA: We know, we know, you just hit your head. But wait—no...

(*consulting notes*) No, I mean who *is* Octavius Caesar? Oh, I see.

Aaron's supposed to be playing him, and Aaron's absent.

NEW KID: I thought that Aaron was Publius. (*ignores the snickers*)

CLARA: He was doubling.

NEW KID: I see. Well, someone else will have to do it.

CLARA: Well, go ahead then.

JESSE: You might as well.

NEW KID: Fine.

CLARA: Fine.

PHILIP: Fine.

(*ALL look at him.*)

What?

RACHEL: *Please* tell me class is over.

CLARA: Not *yet!* We're not nearly done!

NEW KID: Well, then we'd better get right to it. (*to MARK*) We can skip our next scene. It just shows that our characters are planning to raise an army together. Brutus's next scene is much more interesting.

(*STUDENTS flip ahead in scripts; STACIE passes out prop swords.*)

CLARA: Excuse me, I thought I was still the director?

NEW KID: Fine.

CLARA: Fine.

(*ALL look at PHILIP.*)

PHILIP: What?

CLARA: Nothing. Fine. Okay. Whatever. Skip to Scene 2: Brutus and some guys outside his tent at the camp near Sardis.

MARK: Hey, wait! We missed my big speech! FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN—

PHILIP: But, wait! I thought that was *my*—

NEW KID: Actually, I think we've got the gist of it. Moving on.

PHILIP: I *hate* this class.

CLARA: Just go to Scene 2, Mark.

CARL / BRUTUS: Stand Ho!

RACHEL / LUCILIUS: Give the word, ho! And stand!

CARL / BRUTUS: What now, Lucilius! Is Cassius near?

PHILIP: What! I thought Rachel was the Soothsayer!

CLARA: She's doubling as Lucilius!

RACHEL: And as a servant.

CLARA: And as a servant!

CARL: Keep up.

PHILIP: Fine. *(Looks around to see if anybody else is going to say it.)*  
Fine.

CLARA: Go on, Rachel.

RACHEL / LUCILIUS: He's at hand.

CARL / BRUTUS: Comes his army on?

RACHEL / LUCILIUS: They mean this night in Sardis to be quartered.

CARL / BRUTUS: Hark! He is arrived!

*(The two sides array themselves in Flying V formations, facing one another and looking menacing. Well, as menacing as teenagers in togas toting plastic swords can look. JULIO CÉSAR is visibly agitated.)*

JESSE / CASSIUS: Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.

CARL / BRUTUS: Judge me, you gods! Wrong I mine enemeies? And if not so, how should I wrong a brother?

JESSE / CASSIUS: Brutus, this sober form of yours hides wrongs.

CARL / BRUTUS: Cassius, be content. Speak your griefs softly.

*(pause)* Oh, Cassius. I am sick of many griefs.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Of your philosophy you make no use, if you give place to accidental evils.

CARL / BRUTUS: No man bears sorrow better: Portia is dead.

PHILIP: *(to EMILY)* You are?

EMILY: Yup.

PHILIP: Man. Sorry.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Ha? Portia!

CARL / BRUTUS: She is dead.

PHILIP: He already said that.

JESSE / CASSIUS: O insupportable and touching loss! Upon what sickness!

CARL / BRUTUS: Impatient of my absence—

EMILY: Okay. Wait. Let's make this simple for Philip. Basically this is where Brutus explains that I had a huge meltdown over my husband's projected loss in battle and that I cracked under the pressure and killed myself.

PHILIP: You did? Oh, man. Bummer. How?

EMILY: By snacking on some live coals from the fire when my servants weren't looking.

PHILIP: Ugh.

EMILY: Right? As if.

JESSE / CASSIUS: *(clearing throat and getting back into it)* And died so?

CARL / BRUTUS: Even so. Speak no more of her.

JESSE / CASSIUS: But yet my nature could not bear it so.

CARL / BRUTUS: Well, to our work alive. What do you think of marching to Philippi presently?

JESSE / CASSIUS: I do not think it good.

CARL / BRUTUS: Your reason?

JESSE / CASSIUS: This is it: 'Tis better that the enemy seek us: So shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers, doing himself offense, whilst we, lying still, are full of rest, defense, and nimbleness.

CARL / BRUTUS: There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat; and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.

JESSE / CASSIUS: Then, with your will, go on; We'll along ourselves and meet at Philippi.

*(THEY shake hands and exit.)*

CARL: Quick! Where's my candle! *(someone tosses him a fake candle, which HE switches on, then continues as BRUTUS)* How ill this taper burns! Ha! Who comes here?

*(STACIE cues creepy organ music.)*

JULIO CÉSAR: Great... Caesar's... Ghost!

CLARA: Yes, very good, sir! Looks as if you know this play after all.

*(JULIO CÉSAR swoons back and falls from his chair, crawling to cower behind it, in effect acting as HE would if he were to see his own ghost. HE clutches chair back and peeks over it throughout.)*

SIMON / CAESAR: *(standing up on a desk, trying to look ghost-like, wrapped in a black cape. There is a pause, then:)* What's up.

CLARA: In character, everyone!

CARL / BRUTUS: *(also cowering)* Art thou anything? Art thou some god, some angel, some devil, that makest my blood cold, and my hair to stare? Speak to me what thou art.

SIMON / CAESAR: It's your mom.

CLARA: Come ON now!

SIMON / CAESAR: Sorry, sorry, sorry! *(as CAESAR's GHOST)* It's thy evil spirit, Brutus.

CARL / BRUTUS: Why comest thou?

SIMON / CAESAR: To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.

CARL / BRUTUS: Well; then I shall see thee again?

SIMON / CAESAR: Aye. At Philippi.

CARL / BRUTUS: Why, I will see thee at Philippi then.

*(EVERYONE waits and stares at SIMON.)*

SIMON: What?

JESSE: It says here you're supposed to vanish.

SIMON: Oh, okay. Because that's going to happen.

*(SIMON gets down and shuffles away, tripping on his toga and tangling in his cape. JULIO CÉSAR, with mighty effort, pulls himself back to sit in his chair. HE closes eyes and puts back head, appearing to be both exhausted and only semiconscious of his surroundings.)*

CLARA: Ah! Look! We're finally in Act V!

JESSE: *(false enthusiasm)* Oh, goody.

CLARA: Plains of Philippi, everyone! Plains of Philippi! Okay, the messenger comes—oh no, don't get up, Rachel. It'll only confuse Philip—to say that the enemy army is approaching. Take it away, Antony.

MARK / ANTONY: Octavius, lead your battle softly on upon the left hand of the even field.

NEW KID / OCTAVIUS: Upon the right and I: keep thou the left.

MARK / ANTONY: Why do you cross me?

NEW KID / OCTAVIUS: I do not cross you; but I will do so.

PHILIP: Eh?

SIMON: It's a pun.

PHILIP: Well, it's not very funny.

SIMON: As with most puns, they're funnier if you actually get them.

PHILIP: Get what?

SIMON: Nevermind.

CLARA: Here come Brutus, Cassius, and their army!

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