

Act II Scene II: Caesar's House

ORIGINAL TEXT

*Thunder and lightning Enter Julius
CAESAR in his nightgown*

CAESAR: Nor heaven nor earth
have been at peace tonight.
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep
cried out,
“Help, ho! They murder Caesar!”—
Who’s within?

Enter a SERVANT

SERVANT: My lord.

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CAESAR: Go bid the priests do
present sacrifice
And bring me their opinions of
success.

SERVANT: I will, my lord.

*Exit SERVANT
Enter CALPHURNIA*

CALPHURNIA: What mean you,
Caesar? Think you to walk forth?
You shall not stir out of your house
today.

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CAESAR: Caesar shall forth. The
things that threatened me Ne'er
looked but on my back. When they
shall see The face of Caesar, they
are vanished.

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CALPHURNIA: Caesar, I never
stood on ceremonies, Yet now they
frighten me. There is one within,
Besides the things that we have
heard and seen, Recounts most
horrid sights seen by the watch.

MODERN TEXT

*Thunder and lightning. CAESAR
enters in his nightgown.*

CAESAR: Neither the sky nor the
earth have been quiet tonight.
Calpurnia cried out three times in
her sleep, “Help, someone!
They’re murdering Caesar!”
Who’s there?

A SERVANT enters.

SERVANT: My lord?

CAESAR: Go tell the priests to
perform a sacrifice immediately,
and bring me their interpretation
of the results.

SERVANT: I will, my lord.

*The SERVANT exits.
CALPHURNIA enters.*

CALPHURNIA: What are you
doing, Caesar? Are you planning
to go out? You’re not leaving the
house today.

CAESAR: I will go out. The
things that threaten me have only
seen my back. When they see the
face of Caesar, they will vanish.

CALPHURNIA: Caesar, I never
believed in omens, but now they
frighten me. A servant told me the
night-watchmen saw horrid sights
too, but different ones from what
we heard and saw. A lioness gave

A lioness hath whelpèd in the streets, And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead. Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds In ranks and squadrons and right form of war, Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol. The noise of battle hurtled in the air. Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan, And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets. O Caesar! These things are beyond all use, And I do fear them.

CAESAR: What can be avoided Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods? Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions Are to the world in general as to Caesar.

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CALPHURNIA: When beggars die there are no comets seen. The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.

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CAESAR: 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.

Enter SERVANT

What say the augurers?

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SERVANT: They would not have you to stir forth today. Plucking the entrails of an offering forth, They could not find a heart within the beast.

birth in the streets, and graves cracked open and thrust out their dead. Fierce, fiery warriors fought in the clouds in the usual formations of war—ranks and squadrons—until the clouds drizzled blood onto the Capitol. The noise of battle filled the air, and horses neighed, and dying men groaned, and ghosts shrieked and squealed in the streets. Oh, Caesar! These things are beyond anything we've seen before, and I'm afraid.

CAESAR: How can we avoid what the gods want to happen? But I will go out, for these bad omens apply to the world in general as much as they do to me.

CALPHURNIA: When beggars die there are no comets in the sky. The heavens only announce the deaths of princes.

CAESAR: Cowards die many times before their deaths. The brave experience death only once. Of all the strange things I've ever heard, it seems most strange to me that men fear death, given that death, which can't be avoided, will come whenever it wants.

The SERVANT enters.

What do the priests say?

SERVANT: They don't want you to go out today. They pulled out the guts of the sacrificed animal and couldn't find its heart.

CAESAR: The gods do this in shame of cowardice. Caesar should be a beast without a heart If he should stay at home today for fear. No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well That Caesar is more dangerous than he. We are two lions littered in one day, And I the elder and more terrible. And Caesar shall go forth.

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CALPHURNIA: Alas, my lord, Your wisdom is consumed in confidence. Do not go forth today. Call it my fear That keeps you in the house, and not your own. We'll send Mark Antony to the senate house, And he shall say you are not well today. *(kneels)* Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this.

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CAESAR: Mark Antony shall say I am not well, And for thy humor I will stay at home.

CALPHURNIA rises
Enter DECIUS

Here's Decius Brutus. He shall tell them so.

DECIUS: Caesar, all hail! Good morrow, worthy Caesar. I come to fetch you to the senate house.

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CAESAR: And you are come in very happy time To bear my greeting to the senators And tell them that I will not come today. "Cannot" is false, and that I dare not, falser. I will not come today. Tell them so, Decius.

CAESAR : The gods do this to test my bravery. They're saying I'd be an animal without a heart if I stayed home today out of fear. So, I won't. Danger knows that Caesar is more dangerous than he is. We're two lions born on the same day in the same litter, and I'm the older and more terrible. I will go out.

CALPHURNIA: Alas, my lord, your confidence is getting the better of your wisdom. Don't go out today. Say that it's my fear that keeps you inside and not your own. We'll send Mark Antony to the senate house, and he'll say that you're sick today. *(she kneels)* Let me, on my knees, win you over to this plan.

CAESAR: All right. Mark Antony will say I'm not well, and to please you I'll stay at home.

CALPHURNIA gets up.
DECIUS enters.

Here's Decius Brutus. He'll tell them so.

DECIUS: Hail, Caesar! Good morning, worthy Caesar. I've come to take you to the senate house.

CAESAR: And you've come at a good time, so you can convey my greetings to the senators and tell them I won't come today. It wouldn't be true to say that I *can't* come, and even less true to say that I don't *dare* come. I simply *won't* come today. Tell them so, Decius.

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CALPURNIA: Say he is sick.

CALPURNIA: Say he's sick.

CAESAR: Shall Caesar send a lie? Have I in conquest stretched mine arm so far To be afraid to tell graybeards the truth?

CAESAR: Would I send a lie? Have I accomplished so much in battle, but now I'm afraid to tell some old men the truth? Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

Decius, go tell them that Caesar won't come.

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DECIUS: Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause, Lest I be laughed at when I tell them so.

DECIUS: Most mighty Caesar, give me some reason, so I won't be laughed at when I tell them so.

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CAESAR: The cause is in my will. I will not come. That is enough to satisfy the senate. But for your private satisfaction, Because I love you, I will let you know.

CAESAR: The reason is that it's what I want. I'm not coming. That's enough for the senate. But for your private satisfaction, because I love you, I'll tell you. Calpurnia, my wife, is keeping me at home. Last night, she dreamed she saw a statue of me with a hundred holes in it, like a fountain with pure blood flowing from it, and many happy Romans came smiling and washed their hands in it. She takes these signs for warnings and predictions of terrible evils to come, and, on her knee, she begged me to stay home today.

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Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me at home. She dreamt tonight she saw my statue, Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts, Did run pure blood. And many lusty Romans Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it. And these does she apply for warnings and portents And evils imminent, and on her knee Hath begged that I will stay at home today.

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DECIUS: This dream is all amiss interpreted. It was a vision fair and fortunate. Your statue spouting blood in many pipes, In which so many smiling Romans bathed, Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck Reviving blood, and that great men shall press For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance. This by Calphurnia's dream is signified.

DECIUS: This dream has been interpreted all wrong. It was a good and lucky vision. Your statue spouting blood through many holes, in which many smiling Romans bathed, means that you'll provide great Rome with sustaining blood, and that great men will strive to get some token of approval from your holy blood. This is what Calphurnia's dream means.

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CAESAR: And this way have you well expounded it.

DECIUS: I have, when you have heard what I can say. And know it now: the senate have concluded To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar. If you shall send them word you will not come, Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock Apt to be rendered for someone to say, “Break up the senate till another time When Caesar’s wife shall meet with better dreams.” If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper, “Lo, Caesar is afraid”? Pardon me, Caesar. For my dear, dear love To your proceeding bids me tell you this, And reason to my love is liable.

105 **CAESAR:** How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia! I am ashamed I did yield to them. Give me my robe, for I will go.

Enter BRUTUS, LIGARIUS, METELLUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, CINNA, and PUBLIUS

And look, where Publius is come to fetch me.

PUBLIUS: Good morrow, Caesar.

110 **CAESAR:** Welcome, Publius. —What, Brutus, are you stirred so early too? —Good morrow, Casca.—Caius Ligarius, Caesar was ne’er so much your enemy As that same ague which hath made you lean. —What is ’t
115 o’clock?

CAESAR: You’ve offered an excellent interpretation.

DECIUS: I will have when you hear the rest of what I have to say. The senate has decided to give mighty Caesar a crown today. If you send them word that you won’t come, they might change their minds. Besides, someone’s likely to joke, “Adjourn the senate until some other time, when Caesar’s wife has had better dreams.” If you hide yourself, won’t they whisper, “Caesar is afraid?” Pardon me, Caesar. My high hopes for your advancement force me to tell you this. My love gets the better of my manners.

CAESAR : How foolish your fears seem now, Calphurnia! I’m ashamed that I yielded to them. Give me my robe, because I’m going.

PUBLIUS, BRUTUS, LIGARIUS, METELLUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, and CINNA enter.

And look, here’s Publius, come to fetch me.

PUBLIUS: Good morning, Caesar.

CAESAR: Welcome, Publius. What, Brutus? Are you up this early too? Good morning, Casca. Caius Ligarius, I was never your enemy so much as the sickness that’s made you so thin. What time is it?

BRUTUS: Caesar, 'tis
strucken eight.

CAESAR: I thank you for
your pains and courtesy.

Enter ANTONY

See! Antony that revels long
a-nights, is notwithstanding
up. Good morrow, Antony.

ANTONY: So to most noble
Caesar.

CAESAR: Bid them prepare
within. I am to blame to be
thus waited for. —Now,
Cinna.—Now, Metellus.—
What, Trebonius, I have an
hour's talk in store for you.
Remember that you call on me
today. Be near me, that I may
remember you.

TREBONIUS: Caesar, I will.
(aside) And so near will I be
That your best friends shall
wish I had been further.

CAESAR: Good friends, go
in and taste some wine with
me. And we, like friends, will
straightway go together.

BRUTUS: *(aside)* That every
“like” is not the same, O
Caesar,
The heart of Brutus earns to
think upon.

BRUTUS: Caesar, the clock has struck eight.

CAESAR: I thank you all for your trouble and
courtesy.

See, even Antony who stays up partying all night
is awake. Good morning Antony.

ANTONY: And to you, most noble Caesar.

CAESAR: Tell them to prepare the other room
for guests. I'm to blame for making you wait
for me. Now, Cinna. Now, Metellus.
Trebonius! I have an hour-long matter to
discuss with you. Remember to see me today.
Stay near me so I'll remember.

TREBONIUS: Caesar, I will. *(speaking quietly
to himself)* In fact, I'll be so near that your best
friends will wish I'd been further away.

CAESAR: Good friends, go in and have some
wine with me. And we'll leave together, like
friends.

BRUTUS: *(quietly to himself)* That we are now
only “like” friends—Oh Caesar—makes my
heart ache.

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