Th' eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king.

BRUTUS. That you do love me, I am nothing jealous;
What you would work me to, I have some aim:
How I have thought of this and of these times,
I shall recount hereafter; for this present,
I would not, so with love I might entreat you,
Be any further mov'd. What you have said
I will consider; what you have to say
I will with patience hear, and find a time
Both meet to hear and answer such high things.
Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this:
Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome

166. not, so with . . . you | not so (with . . . you) Ff.

160. **eternal**. Johnson suggested 'infernal.' Dr. Wright (Clar.) points out that in three plays printed in 1600 Shakespeare uses 'infernal,' but substitutes 'eternal' in *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, in obedience probably to the popular Puritan agitation against profanity on the stage. This has been used as evidence to determine dates of composition. See Introduction, page xx. Cf. with this use of 'eternal' the old Yankee term 'tarnal' in such expressions as 'tarnal scamp,' 'tarnal shame,' etc.

162. **am nothing jealous**: do not doubt. Cf. l. 71. 'Jealous' and 'zealous' are etymologically the same word. See Skeat.

163. **work me to**: prevail upon me to do. Cf. *Hamlet*, IV, vii, 64. — **aim**: guess. Cf. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, III, i, 28. Similarly with the verb in *Romeo and Juliet*, I, i, 211; *Othello*, III, iii, 223.

171. 'To chew' is, literally, in the Latin equivalent, 'to ruminate.' Cf. *As You Like It*, IV, iii, 102: "Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy." In Bacon's Essays, *Of Studies*, we have, with reference to books: "Some few are to be chewed and digested." So in Lyly's *Euphues*: "Philantus went into the fields to walk there, either to digest his choler, or chew upon his melancholy."

Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us.
CASSIUS. I am glad that my weak words
Have struck but thus much show of fire from Brutus.

Enter CÆSAR *and his train*

BRUTUS. The games are done, and Cæsar is returning.
CASSIUS. As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve;
And he will, after his sour fashion, tell you
What hath proceeded worthy note to-day.
BRUTUS. I will do so. But, look you, Cassius,
The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train:
Calpurnia's cheek is pale; and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being cross'd in conference by some senators.

178. Scene IV Pope. 178–179. Four lines in Ff.

174. **these . . . as**. See note, l. 34; Abbott, §§ 112, 280.

177. In *Troilus and Cressida*, III, iii, 256, Thersites says of the wit of Ajax: "It lies as coldly in him as fire in a flint, which will not show without knocking." The same figure is found in the description which Brutus gives of his unimpassioned nature, IV, iii, 112–114.

181. **proceeded**: happened, come to pass. So in *All's Well that Ends Well*, IV, ii, 62. — **worthy note**. Cf. *All's Well that Ends Well*, III, v, 104. For the ellipsis of the preposition, see Abbott, § 198 a.

186. One of the marked physical characteristics of the albinotic ferret is the red or pink eye. Shakespeare turns the noun 'ferret' into an adjective. The description of Cicero is purely imaginary; but the angry spot on Cæsar's brow, Calpurnia's pale cheek, and Cicero with fire in his eyes when kindled by opposition in the Senate, make an exceedingly vivid picture.

CASSIUS. Casca will tell us what the matter is.
CÆSAR. Antonius!
ANTONY. Cæsar?
CÆSAR. Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights:
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.
ANTONY. Fear him not, Cæsar; he 's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
CÆSAR. Would he were fatter! but I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,

191. Cæsar? Theobald | Cæsar. Ff. 193. o' nights Capell | a-nights F1F2.

192–195. "Another time when Cæsar's friends complained unto him of Antonius and Dolabella, that they pretended some mischief towards him, he answered them again, As for those fat men, and smooth-combed heads, quoth he, I never reckon of them; but these pale visaged and carrion lean people, I fear them most; meaning Brutus and Cassius."—Plutarch, *Julius Cæsar*. There are similar passages in Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* and in the *Life of Marcus Antonius*. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, xi, 37. Falstaff's famous cry was for 'spare men.' See *2 Henry IV*, III, ii, 288. 'Sleek-headed' recalls Lamb's wish that the baby son of the tempestuous Hazlitt should be "like his father, with something of a better temper and a smoother head of hair."

197. **well given**: well disposed. So in *2 Henry VI*, III, i, 72.

203. **he loves no plays**. "In his house they did nothing but feast, dance, and masque; and himself passed away the time in hearing of foolish plays, and in marrying these players, tumblers, jesters, and such sort of people."—Plutarch, *Marcus Antonius*.

As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music:
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear, for always I am Cæsar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.
[*Sennet. Exeunt* CÆSAR *and all his train but* CASCA]
CASCA. You pull'd me by the cloak; would you speak with me?
BRUTUS. Ay, Casca; tell us what hath chanc'd to-day,
That Cæsar looks so sad.
CASCA. Why, you were with him, were you not?
BRUTUS. I should not then ask Casca what had chanc'd.

215. Scene V Pope.

204. The power of music is repeatedly celebrated by Shakespeare, and sometimes in strains that approximate the classical hyperboles about Orpheus, Amphion, and Arion. What is here said of Cassius has an apt commentary in *The Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 83–85:

> The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.

213. This is one of the little touches of invention that so often impart a fact-like vividness to Shakespeare's scenes.

217. **sad**. The word is used here probably in its early sense of 'weary' (as in Middle English) or 'resolute' (as in Chaucer and old Ballads). In *2 Henry IV*, V, i, 92, is the expression "a jest with a sad brow," where 'sad' evidently means 'wise,' 'sage.'

CASCA. Why, there was a crown offer'd him; and being offer'd him, he put it by with the back of his hand, thus; and then the people fell a-shouting.

BRUTUS. What was the second noise for?

CASCA. Why, for that too.

CASSIUS. They shouted thrice: what was the last cry for?

CASCA. Why, for that too.

BRUTUS. Was the crown offer'd him thrice?

CASCA. Ay, marry, was 't, and he put it by thrice, every time gentler than other; and at every putting by mine honest neighbours shouted.

CASSIUS. Who offer'd him the crown?

CASCA. Why, Antony.

BRUTUS. Tell us the manner of it, gentle Casca.

CASCA. I can as well be hang'd as tell the manner of it: it was mere foolery; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown — yet 'twas not a crown neither, 'twas one of these coronets — and, as I told you, he put it by once: but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offer'd it to him again; then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was very loth to lay his fingers off it. And then he offer'd it the third time; he put it the third time by: and still, as he refus'd it, the rabblement hooted and clapp'd their chopp'd hands, and threw up their sweaty nightcaps and utter'd such a deal of stinking breath because Cæsar refus'd the crown, that it had almost chok'd Cæsar;

222. **a-shouting** Dyce | a shouting Ff | a' shouting Capell.
235. **it was** F_1 | it were $F_2F_3F_4$.
242. **hooted** Johnson | howted $F_1F_2F_3$ | houted F_4.
243. **chopp'd** | chopt Ff.

220. **there was a crown offer'd him.** In the *Life of Marcus Antonius* Plutarch gives a detailed and vivid description of this scene.

for he swounded and fell down at it: and for mine own part, I durst not laugh, for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air.

CASSIUS. But, soft! I pray you: what, did Cæsar swound?

CASCA. He fell down in the market-place, and foam'd at mouth, and was speechless.

BRUTUS. 'T is very like; he hath the falling-sickness.

CASSIUS. No, Cæsar hath it not; but you, and I,
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.

CASCA. I know not what you mean by that, but I am sure Cæsar fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleas'd and displeas'd them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man.

BRUTUS. What said he when he came unto himself?

246. **swounded** | swoonded Ff | swooned Rowe.
249. **swound** Ff | swoon Rowe.
252. **like; he** Theobald | like he Ff.

249. **soft!** This is an elliptical use of the adverb 'soft' and was much used as an exclamation for arresting or retarding the speed of a person or thing; meaning about the same as 'hold!' 'stay!' or 'not too fast!' So in *Othello*, V, ii, 338: "Soft you; a word or two before you go"; and *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, i, 320: "Soft! The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste."

252. **falling-sickness.** An old English name for epilepsy (Lat. *morbus caducus*, German *fallende Sucht*) used by North in translating Plutarch. Another form of the word is 'falling-evil,' also used by North (see quotation, p. 26, l. 268). It is an interesting fact that the best authorities allow that Napoleon suffered from epileptic seizures towards the close of his life.

256. **tag-rag people:** Cf. 'the tag' in *Coriolanus*, III, i, 248.

259. **true:** honest. Shakespeare frequently uses 'true' in this sense, especially as opposed to 'thief.' Cf. *Cymbeline*, II, iii, 76; *Venus and Adonis*, 724: "Rich preys make true men thieves."

CASCA. Marry, before he fell down, when he perceiv'd the common herd was glad he refus'd the crown, he pluck'd me ope his doublet and offer'd them his throat to cut. And I had been a man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at a word, I would I might go to hell among the rogues. And so he fell. When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said any thing amiss, he desir'd their worships to think it was his infirmity. Three or four wenches, where I stood, cried, 'Alas, good soul!' and forgave him with all their hearts. But there 's no heed to be taken of them: if Cæsar had stabb'd their mothers, they would have done no less. 272

263. And Ff | an (an') Theobald. 270. no omitted in F2.

261. **Marry**. The common Elizabethan exclamation of surprise, or asseveration, corrupted from the name of the Virgin Mary.

263. **me**. The ethical dative. Cf. III, iii, 18; *The Merchant of Venice*, I, iii, 85; *Romeo and Juliet*, III, i, 6. See Abbott, § 220. — **doublet**. This was the common English name of a man's outer body-garment. Shakespeare dresses his Romans like Elizabethan Englishmen (cf. II, i, 73–74), but the expression 'doublet-collar' occurs in North's Plutarch (see quotation in note on ll. 268–270). — **And**: if. For 'and' in this sense, see Murray, and Abbott, § 101.

264. **a man of any occupation**. This probably means not only a mechanic or user of cutting-tools, but also a man of business and of action, as distinguished from a gentleman of leisure, or an idler.

265–266. **to hell among the rogues**. The early English drama abounds in examples of such historical confusion. For example, in the Towneley Miracle Plays Noah's wife swears by the Virgin Mary.

268–270. "Thereupon Cæsar rising departed home to his house; and, tearing open his doublet-collar, making his neck bare, he cried out aloud to his friends, that his throat was ready to offer to any man that would come and cut it. . . . Afterwards, to excuse his folly, he imputed it to his disease, saying that their wits are not perfect which have this disease of the falling-evil." — Plutarch, *Julius Cæsar*.

BRUTUS. And after that, he came, thus sad, away?

CASCA. Ay.

CASSIUS. Did Cicero say any thing? 275

CASCA. Ay, he spoke Greek.

CASSIUS. To what effect?

CASCA. Nay, and I tell you that, I 'll ne'er look you i' the face again: but those that understood him smil'd at one another and shook their heads; but, for mine own part, it was Greek to me. I could tell you more news too: Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Cæsar's images, are put to silence. Fare you well. There was more foolery yet, if I could remember it.

CASSIUS. Will you sup with me to-night, Casca? 285

CASCA. No, I am promis'd forth.

CASSIUS. Will you dine with me to-morrow?

CASCA. Ay, if I be alive, and your mind hold, and your dinner worth the eating.

CASSIUS. Good; I will expect you. 290

CASCA. Do so: farewell, both. [*Exit*]

273. away? Theobald | away F1. 278. and Ff | an (an') Theobald.

275–281. A charming invention, though in his *Life of Cicero* Plutarch refers to the orator's nicknames, 'Grecian' and 'scholer,' due to his ability to "declaim in Greek." Cicero had a sharp, agile tongue, and was fond of using it; and nothing was more natural than that he should snap off some keen, sententious sayings, prudently veiling them, however, in a foreign language from all but those who might safely understand them. — **Greek to me**. 'Greek,' often 'heathen Greek,' was a common Elizabethan expression for unintelligible speech. In Dekker's *Grissil* (1600) occurs "It 's Greek to him." So in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge:* "this is Greek to me."

286. **I am promis'd forth**: I have promised to go out. 'Forth' is often used in this way in Elizabethan literature without any verb of motion. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, II, v, 11. See Abbott, § 41.

BRUTUS. What a blunt fellow is this grown to be!
He was quick mettle when he went to school.
CASSIUS. So is he now, in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise,
However he puts on this tardy form.
This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
With better appetite.
BRUTUS. And so it is. For this time I will leave you:
To-morrow, if you please to speak with me,
I will come home to you; or, if you will,
Come home to me, and I will wait for you.
CASSIUS. I will do so: till then, think of the world.
[*Exit* BRUTUS]
Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,
Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is dispos'd: therefore it is meet

298. **digest** F_3F_4 | disgest F_1F_2.
299. **appetite** F_1 | appetites $F_2F_3F_4$.
300. Ff print as two lines.
306. **metal** F_3F_4 | mettle F_1 | mettall F_2.

292. **blunt**: dull, slow. Or there may be a quibble involved in connection with 'mettle' in the next line. Brutus alludes to the 'tardy form' (l. 296) Casca has just 'put on' in winding so long about the matter before coming to the point.

293. **quick mettle**: lively spirit. Collier conjectured 'quick-mettl'd.' 'Mettlesome' is still used of spirited horses. Cf. I, i, 63.

296. **However**: notwithstanding. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, I, iii, 322. — **tardy form**: appearance of tardiness. The construction in this expression is common in Shakespeare, as 'shady stealth' for 'stealing shadow,' in *Sonnets*, LXXVII, 7; 'negligent danger' for 'danger from negligence,' in *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, v, 81.

307. **that it is dispos'd**: that which it is disposed to. For the omission of prepositions in Shakespeare, see Abbott, §§ 198–202. Cassius in this speech is chuckling over the effect his talk has had upon Brutus.

That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?
Cæsar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus:
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humour me. I will this night,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,
As if they came from several citizens,
Writings, all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his name; wherein obscurely
Cæsar's ambition shall be glanced at:
And after this let Cæsar seat him sure;
For we will shake him, or worse days endure. [*Exit*]

310. **bear me hard**: has a grudge against me. This remarkable expression occurs three times in this play, but nowhere else in Shakespeare. Professor Hales quotes an example of it from Ben Jonson's *Catiline*, IV, v. It seems to have been borrowed from horsemanship, and to mean 'carries tight rein,' or 'reins hard,' like one who distrusts his horse. So before, ll. 35, 36:

> You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
> Over your friend that loves you.

312. **humour**. To 'humor' a man, as the word is here used, is to turn and wind and manage him by watching his moods and crotchets, and to touch him accordingly. It is somewhat in doubt whether the 'he' in the preceding line refers to Brutus or to Cæsar. If to Brutus, the meaning of course is: he should not play upon my humors and fancies as I do upon his. And this sense is fairly required by the context, for the whole speech is occupied with the speaker's success in cajoling Brutus, and with plans for cajoling and shaping him still further. Johnson refers 'he' to Cæsar.

313. **hands**: handwritings. So the word is used colloquially to-day.

319. We will either shake him, or endure worse days in suffering the consequences of our attempt. — Shakespeare makes Cassius overflow with intense personal spite against Cæsar. This is in accordance with what he read in North's Plutarch.

Scene III. *The same. A street*

Thunder and lightning. Enter, from opposite sides, Casca, *with his sword drawn, and* Cicero

Cicero. Good even, Casca: brought you Cæsar home?
Why are you breathless? and why stare you so?
Casca. Are you not mov'd, when all the sway of earth
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,
I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have riv'd the knotty oaks, and I have seen
Th' ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,
To be exalted with the threatening clouds;
But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,

Scene III Capell | Scene VI Pope. | and Cicero Ff.
Enter, from . . . | Enter Caska, | 10. **tempest dropping fire** Rowe | tempest-dropping-fire Ff.

Scene III. Rowe added "with his sword drawn" to the Folio stage direction, basing the note on l. 19.

A month has passed since the machinery of the conspiracy was set in motion. The action in the preceding scene took place on the day of the Lupercalia; the action in this is on the eve of the Ides of March.

1. **brought**: accompanied. Cf. *Richard II*, I, iv, 2.

3–4. **sway of earth**: established order. "The balanced swing of earth." — Craik. "The whole weight or momentum of this globe." — Johnson. In such a raging of the elements, it seems as if the whole world were going to pieces, or as if the earth's steadfastness were growing 'unfirm.' "'Unfirm' is not firm; while 'infirm' is weak." — Clar.

11–13. Either the gods are fighting among themselves, or else they are making war on the world for being overbearing in its attitude towards them. For Shakespeare's use of 'saucy,' see Century.

Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.
Cicero. Why, saw you any thing more wonderful?
Casca. A common slave — you know him well by sight —
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand,
Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd.
Besides — I ha' not since put up my sword —
Against the Capitol I met a lion,

13. **destruction.** Must be pronounced as a quadrisyllable.

14. **any thing more wonderful.** This may be interpreted as 'anything that was more wonderful,' or 'anything more that was wonderful.' The former seems the true interpretation. For the 'wonderful' things that Casca describes, Shakespeare was indebted to the following passage from Plutarch's *Julius Cæsar*, which North in the margin entitles "Predictions and foreshews of Cæsar's death": "Certainly destiny may easier be foreseen than avoided, considering the strange and wonderful signs that were said to be seen before Cæsar's death. For, touching the fires in the element, and spirits running up and down in the night, and also the solitary birds to be seen at noondays sitting in the great market-place, are not all these signs perhaps worth the noting, in such a wonderful chance as happened? But Strabo the philosopher writeth, that divers men were seen going up and down in fire, and furthermore, that there was a slave of the soldiers that did cast a marvellous burning flame out of his hand, insomuch as they that saw it thought he had been burnt; but when the fire was out, it was found he had no hurt. Cæsar self also, doing sacrifice unto the gods, found that one of the beasts which was sacrificed had no heart: and that was a strange thing in nature, how a beast could live without a heart." This passage is worth special attention, as Shakespeare uses many of the details again in II, ii, 17–24, 39–40. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, i, 113–125.

15. **you know.** Dyce suggested 'you 'd know'; Craik, 'you knew.' But the text as it stands is dramatically vivid and realistic.

Who glaz'd upon me and went surly by
Without annoying me: and there were drawn
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,
Transformed with their fear, who swore they saw
Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.
And yesterday the bird of night did sit
Even at noon-day upon the market-place,
Hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,
'These are their reasons; they are natural;'

21. **glaz'd** Ff | glar'd Rowe.— **surly** F_1F_4 | surely F_2F_3. 28. **Hooting** Johnson | Howting $F_1F_2F_3$ | Houting F_4.

21. **Who.** See Abbott, § 264. — **glaz'd.** Rowe's change to 'glar'd' is usually adopted as the reading here, but 'glaze' is used intransitively in Middle English in the sense of 'shine brilliantly,' and Dr. Wright (Clar) says: "I am informed by a correspondent that the word 'glaze' in the sense of 'stare' is common in some parts of Devonshire, and that 'glazing like a conger' is a familiar expression in Cornwall." See Murray for additional examples.

23. **Upon a heap**: together in a crowd. 'Heap' is often used in this sense in Middle English as it is colloquially to-day. The Anglo-Saxon *héap* almost always refers to persons. In *Richard III*, II, i, 53, occurs "princely heap." So "Let us on heaps go offer up our lives" in *Henry V*, IV, v, 18.

26. **the bird of night.** The old Roman horror of the owl is well shown in this passage (spelling modernized) of Holland's Pliny, quoted by Dr. Wright (Clar): "The screech-owl betokeneth always some heavy news, and is most execrable . . . in the presages of public affairs. . . . In sum, he is the very monster of the night. . . . There fortuned one of them to enter the very sanctuary of the Capitol, in that year when Sextus Papellio Ister and Lucius Pedanius were Consuls; whereupon, at the Nones of March, the city of Rome that year made general processions, to appease the wrath of the gods, and was solemnly purged by sacrifices."

30. **These**: such and such. Cf. "these and these" in II, i, 31. Casca refers to the doctrine of the Epicureans, who were slow to

For, I believe, they are portentous things
Unto the climate that they point upon.

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

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

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

CASCA. Farewell, Cicero. [*Exit* CICERO]

Enter CASSIUS

CASSIUS. Who 's there?

CASCA. A Roman.

CASSIUS. Casca, by your voice.

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

36. **to** F_1F_2 | up F_3F_4. 41. Scene VII Pope. 42. Two lines in Ff.—**this!** Dyce | this? Ff.

believe that such pranks of the elements had any moral significance in them, or that moral causes had anything to do with them, and held that the explanation of them was to be sought for in the simple working of natural laws and forces. Shakespeare deals humorously with these views in *All 's Well that Ends Well*, II, iii, 1–6.

32. **climate**: region, country. So *Richard II*, IV, i, 130. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, i, 125: "Unto our climatures and countrymen."

35. **Clean**: quite, completely. From the fourteenth century to the seventeenth 'clean' was often used in this sense, usually with verbs of removal and the like, and so it is still used colloquially. For 'from' without a verb of motion, see Abbott, § 158.

42. **what**: what a. For the omission of the indefinite article, common in Shakespeare, see Abbott, § 86. In the Folios the interrogation mark and the exclamation mark are often interchanged.

CASSIUS. A very pleasing night to honest men.

CASCA. Who ever knew the heavens menace so?

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

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

CASSIUS. You are dull, Casca; and those sparks of life
That should be in a Roman you do want,
Or else you use not. You look pale and gaze
And put on fear and cast yourself in wonder,

50. **blue** | blew F1. 57-60. Five lines in Ff.

48. **unbraced**: unbuttoned, with open doublet. For such anachronisms see note, p. 26, l. 263; also p. 48, l. 73.

49. **thunder-stone**: thunder-bolt. It is still a common belief in Scotland and Ireland that a stone or bolt falls with lightning. Cf. *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 271: "Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone."

50. **cross**: zigzag. So in *King Lear*, IV, vii, 33–35:

> To stand against the deep, dread-bolted thunder?
> In the most terrible and nimble stroke
> Of quick, cross lightning?

60. **cast yourself in**: throw yourself into a state of. In previous editions of Hudson's Shakespeare Jervis's conjecture 'case' for 'cast' was adopted. The change is unnecessary. Cf. *Cymbeline*, III, ii, 38: "Though forfeiters you cast in prison."

To see the strange impatience of the heavens:
But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,
Why old men, fools, and children calculate;
Why all these things change from their ordinance,
Their natures and preformed faculties,
To monstrous quality, why, you shall find
That heaven hath infus'd them with these spirits,
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state.
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man

65. **old men, fools, and** | Old men, Fooles, and F1F2 | Old men, Fools, and F3F4 | old men fools, and Steevens | old men fool and White.

63–68. The construction here is involved, and the grammar confused, but the meaning is clear enough. The general idea is that of elements and animals, and even human beings, acting in a manner out of or against their nature, or changing their natures and original faculties from the course in which they were ordained to move, to monstrous or unnatural modes of action.

64. **from quality and kind**: turn from their disposition and nature. Emerson and Browning use 'quality' (cf. l. 68) in this old sense of 'disposition.' 'Kind,' meaning 'nature,' is common in Shakespeare.

65. There seems no necessity for changing the reading of the Folios. This conjunction of old men, fools, and children is found in country sayings in England to-day. So in a Scottish proverb: "Auld fowks, fules, and bairns should never see wark half dune." White's reading was first suggested by Mitford.

67. **preformed**: originally created for some special purpose.

71. **monstrous state**: abnormal condition of things. 'Enormous state' occurs with probably the same general meaning in *King Lear*, II, ii, 176. As Cassius is an avowed Epicurean, it may seem out of character to make him speak thus. But he is here talking for effect, his aim being to kindle and instigate Casca into the conspiracy; and to this end he does not hesitate to say what he does not himself believe.

Most like this dreadful night,
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
As doth the lion in the Capitol,
A man no mightier than thyself or me
In personal action, yet prodigious grown,
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

CASCA. 'T is Cæsar that you mean, is it not, Cassius?

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

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

74. roars | roares F_1 | teares F_2.
79. Two lines in Ff.
81. thews | Thewes F_1F_2 | Sinews F_3F_4.

75. This reads as if a lion were kept in the Capitol. But the meaning probably is that Cæsar roars in the Capitol, like a lion. Perhaps Cassius has the idea of Cæsar's claiming or aspiring to be among men what the lion is among beasts. Dr. Wright suggests that Shakespeare had in mind the lions kept in the Tower of London, "which there is reason to believe from indications in the play represented the Capitol to Shakespeare's mind." It is possible, too, that we have here a reference to the lion described by Casca in ll. 20–22.

77. **prodigious**: portentous. As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V, i, 419: "Never mole, hare lip, nor scar, Nor mark prodigious."

80. **Let it be who it is**: "no matter who it is." — Clar.

81. **thews**: muscles. So in *Hamlet*, I, iii, 12, and *2 Henry IV*, III, ii, 276. In Chaucer and Middle English the word means 'manners,' though in Layamon's *Brut* (l. 6361), in the singular, it seems to mean 'sinew' or 'strength.' See Skeat for a suggestive discussion.

83. **with**: by. So in III, ii, 196. See Abbott, § 193.

CASSIUS. I know where I will wear this dagger then;
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides,
That part of tyranny that I do bear
I can shake off at pleasure. [*Thunder still*]

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

CASSIUS. And why should Cæsar be a tyrant then?
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves

95. Can repress by force man's energy of soul.

101. **bondman**. The word 'cancel' in the next line shows that Casca plays on the two senses of 'bond.' Cf. *Cymbeline*, V, iv, 28.

107–108. The idea seems to be that, as men start a huge fire with worthless straws or shavings, so Cæsar is using the degenerate Romans of the time to set the whole world a-blaze with his own glory. Cassius's enthusiastic hatred of "the mightiest Julius" is irresistibly delightful. For a good hater is the next best thing to a true friend; and Cassius's honest gushing malice is surely better than Brutus's stabbing sentimentalism.

For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Cæsar! But, O grief,
Where hast thou led me? I perhaps speak this
Before a willing bondman; then I know
My answer must be made. But I am arm'd,
And dangers are to me indifferent.

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

CASSIUS. There 's a bargain made.
Now know you, Casca, I have mov'd already
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans
To undergo with me an enterprise
Of honourable-dangerous consequence;
And I do know, by this they stay for me

112–115. The meaning is, Perhaps you will go and tell Cæsar all I have said about him, and then he will call me to account for it. Very well; go tell him; and let him do his worst. I care not.

117. **Fleering.** This word of Scandinavian origin seems to unite the senses of 'grinning,' 'flattering' (see *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, ii, 109, and Ben Jonson's "fawn and fleer" in *Volpone*, III, i, 20), and 'sneering,' and so is just the right epithet for a telltale, who flatters you into saying that of another which you ought not to say, and then mocks you by going to that other and telling what you have said. — **Hold, my hand:** stay! here is my hand. As men clasp hands in sealing a bargain. In Rowe's text the comma is omitted.

118. **Be factious:** be active. Or it may mean, 'form a party,' 'join a conspiracy.' — **griefs:** grievances. The effect put for the cause. A common Shakespearian metonymy. Cf. III, ii, 211; IV, ii, 42, 46.

123. **undergo:** undertake. So in *2 Henry IV*, I, iii, 54; *The Winter's Tale*, II, iii, 164; IV, iv, 554.

125. **by this:** by this time. So in *King Lear*, IV, vi, 45.

In Pompey's porch: for now, this fearful night,
There is no stir or walking in the streets,
And the complexion of the element
In favour 's like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.

Enter CINNA.

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

CASSIUS. 'T is Cinna; I do know him by his gait;
He is a friend. Cinna, where haste you so?

CINNA. To find out you. Who's that? Metellus Cimber?

CASSIUS. No, it is Casca; one incorporate
To our attempts. Am I not stay'd for, Cinna?

129. **In favour 's like** Camb | In favour's, like Johnson | Is Favors, like F_1F_2 | Is Favours, like F_3F_4 | Is favour'd like Capell | Is feav'rous, like Rowe.

130. **bloody, fiery** | bloodie, fierie Ff | bloody-fiery Dyce.

132. **gait** Johnson | gate Ff.

126. **Pompey's porch.** This was a spacious adjunct to the huge theater that Pompey had built in the Campus Martius, outside of the city proper; and there, as Plutarch says in *Marcus Brutus*, "was set up the image of Pompey, which the city had made and consecrated in honour of him, when he did beautify that part of the city with the theatre he built, with divers porches about it." Here it was that Cæsar was stabbed to death; and though Shakespeare transfers the assassination to the Capitol, he makes Cæsar's blood stain the statue of Pompey. See III, ii, 187, 188.

128. **element:** sky. Twice Shakespeare seems to poke fun at the way in which the Elizabethans overdid the use of 'element' in this sense, in *Twelfth Night*, III, i, 65, and in *2 Henry IV*, IV, iii, 58.

129. **favour:** appearance. So in I, ii, 91. Johnson's emendation, though pleonastic, makes least change upon the text of the Folios.

131. **close:** hidden. So in *1 Chronicles*, xii, 1: "He yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish."

135. **incorporate:** closely united. Shakespeare uses this word nine times, — four times as an adjective and five times as a verb. With regard to the omission of *-ed* in participial forms, see Abbott, § 342.

CINNA. I'm glad on't. What a fearful night is this!
There's two or three of us have seen strange sights.
CASSIUS. Am I not stay'd for? tell me.
CINNA. Yes, you are.
O, Cassius, if you could
But win the noble Brutus to our party —
CASSIUS. Be you content. Good Cinna, take this paper,
And look you lay it in the prætor's chair,
Where Brutus may but find it; and throw this
In at his window; set this up with wax
Upon old Brutus' statue: all this done,
Repair to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us.
Is Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?

137. Two lines in Ff.
140. O, Cassius | Ff print in line 139.
141. the noble Brutus | Ff print in line 140.

143. **in the prætor's chair.** "But for Brutus, his friends and countrymen, both by divers procurements and sundry rumours of the city, and by many bills[1] also, did openly call and procure him to do that he did. For under the image of his ancestor Junius Brutus, (that drave the kings out of Rome) they wrote: 'O, that it pleased the gods thou wert now alive, Brutus!' and again, 'that thou wert here among us now!' His tribunal or chair, where he gave audience during the time he was Prætor, was full of such bills: 'Brutus, thou art asleep, and art not Brutus indeed.'" — Plutarch, *Marcus Brutus*.

144. **Brutus may but find it**: only Brutus may find it.

148. For a discussion of singular verbs with plural subjects, see Abbott, § 333. Cf. l. 138, l. 155; III, ii, 26. — **Decius Brutus.** As indicated in the notes to the Dramatis Personæ, this should be 'Decimus Brutus.' Shakespeare found the form 'Decius' in North's Plutarch, who translated from Amyot, in whose French version the blunder was originally made. Decimus Brutus is said to have been cousin to the other Brutus of the play. He had been one of Cæsar's ablest, most favored, and most trusted lieutenants, and had

[1] i.e. scrolls.

CINNA. All but Metellus Cimber; and he's gone
To seek you at your house. Well, I will hie,
And so bestow these papers as you bade me.
CASSIUS. That done, repair to Pompey's theatre.
[*Exit* CINNA]
Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day
See Brutus at his house: three parts of him
Is ours already, and the man entire
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.
CASCA. O, he sits high in all the people's hearts;
And that which would appear offence in us,
His countenance, like richest alchemy,
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.
CASSIUS. Him and his worth and our great need of him,
You have right well conceited. Let us go,
For it is after midnight, and ere day
We will awake him and be sure of him. [*Exeunt*]

151. bade Rowe | bad Ff.

particularly distinguished himself in his naval service at Venetia and Massilia. After the murder of Cæsar, he was found to be written down in his will as second heir.

159. **countenance**: support. — **alchemy**: the old ideal art of turning base metals into gold. So in *Sonnets*, XXXIII, 4: "Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy." Cf. *King John*, III, i, 78.

162. **conceited**: formed an idea of, conceived, judged. 'Conceit' as a verb occurs again in III, i, 193, and in *Othello*, III, iii, 149.