Julius Caesar

# Act V Notes

* Octavius and Anthony confer on the plains of Philippi.
* Octavius is surprised to see that Brutus and Cassius's army has come to meet them, especially since Antony thought the enemy would stay put. Antony thinks the enemy is fronting: clearly Brutus and Cassius mean to appear courageous and brave, but Antony can see right through that.
* Antony and Octavius set up a battle plan and are met by Brutus and Cassius – each with his army behind him – for a pre-battle parley, or negotiation.
* As Brutus tries to get them to reason (and maybe avoid the fight), Antony and Octavius bait him. They claim Brutus's words are no good when they're accompanied by bad strokes (of the sword). Antony's like, remember that time you cried "Long live! Hail Caesar!" while you stabbed him in the heart? This is a sore point for Brutus.
* There's some more back and forth, and folks get testy. Finally Octavius draws his sword and says he won't put it back again until he's dead or Caesar's 33 wounds (not that anybody's counting) are avenged.
* After more of this taunting, Antony and Octavius challenge Brutus and Cassius to meet them on the battlefield.
* As Brutus talks with Lucilius privately, Cassius confides in Messala that it's his birthday. Though Cassius claims to be an Epicurean (meaning he doesn't believe in "signs and omens" mumbo jumbo), he's inclined to begin thinking differently after seeing something weird on his way from Sardis: two eagles swooped down from the sky, feeding out of the soldiers' hands. In the morning they were replaced by "ravens, crows, and kites" that spread like a shadow of death over the army. (Not a good sign.)
* Messala tries to sway Cassius from the bad-omen talk, but Cassius brushes it off, saying he's still ready to face his peril.
* Then Brutus and Cassius speak and agree to say goodbye to each other in a way that would be fitting if this were to be their last meeting ever.
* Cassius asks Brutus what he'll do if things get bad, possibly hinting at suicide. Brutus points out that he condemned his father-in-law, Cato (who had fought on Pompey's side), for killing himself instead of giving himself over to Caesar. He's not sure what he'll do if they're defeated, as he finds suicide to be cowardly, especially if no one's really sure how things might turn out if they stay alive.
* Cassius points out that if they lose, Brutus will be dragged through the streets of Rome.
* Without explicitly saying he's decided to kill himself if they fail, Brutus declares that he'll never be taken to Rome in chains. Unless Brutus plans to catch the next plane to Vegas, we've just seen the great man commit himself to suicide.
* Brutus and Cassius part nobly, saying that if they never see each other again, this was a good goodbye.
* Brutus ends on a sort of Debbie Downer note, saying that although they don't know how, this day will come to an end. This is nice foreshadowing if you like that sort of "death is inevitable" talk.
* Brutus sends Messala to ride out and instruct the soldiers to bear down on Octavius's side of the enemy's army. That group lacks spirit and might easily fall after a good push.
* Cassius and Titinius watch the battle from another part of the field.
* When Cassius's standard-bearer (the guy who carries his battle flag) tried to run away, Cassius killed him and took up the flag himself. This guy is merciless!
* Titinius doesn't comment on this behavior but points out that Brutus came down on Octavius's army too early. Though they were initially weaker, Octavius's men now appear to be overtaking Brutus's, and Antony is enclosing Cassius's. The situation is looking pretty dire for Cassius and Brutus.
* Pindarus comes to Cassius and Titinius with the news that Antony has invaded Cassius's tents. He tries to get Cassius to run away, but Cassius is distracted by a set of troops in the distance.
* Cassius sends Titinius off on horseback to see whether the troops are friends or enemies. He also sends Pindarus higher up the hill to watch and report on Titinius's progress.
* Cassius notes to himself that his birthday is a good day to die, his life having come full circle.
* Cassius is resigned to his fate, but he still fights on. Pindarus reports on Titinius play by play. A horde of horsemen has surrounded Titinius. Now they've overtaken him. And now they're shouting with joy. It looks like the worst has happened.
* Cassius calls for Pindarus to stop watching. He laments that he's such a coward to have sent his best friend Titinius to his death. Pindarus returns to Cassius's side, and Cassius speaks to him.
* Cassius reminds Pindarus how he took him prisoner at Parthia and spared his life on the condition that he do whatever Cassius asked him to. Cassius then tells Pindarus how to make himself a free man: he should kill him with the very blade he used to kill Caesar.
* Pindarus stabs Cassius, who dies declaring that Caesar is avenged by the same sword that killed him.
* Pindarus, now hovering around Cassius's body, claims that this wasn't the way he wanted to gain his freedom, and that if he had his own will (and hadn't been Cassius's servant), he wouldn't have done it. He declares that he'll run far away so no Roman will ever see (or enslave) him again.
* Messala then enters the scene with Titinius (who – surprise! – is not dead), announcing the new state of the battle: they're basically even on both sides. Brutus has overtaken Octavius's forces, while Antony's forces have beaten Cassius's men.
* The men are stoked to tell Cassius that all isn't lost, but then they see his dead body, which is in no condition to accept good news.
* Titinius realizes that Cassius must have misunderstood what had happened on the hilltop.
* Messala is more Action Jackson than super-sleuth; he goes off unhappily to inform Brutus of Cassius's death. Meanwhile, Titinius is left to find Pindarus.
* It doesn't matter where Pindarus is, and Titinius doesn't even look for him. Instead, Titinius explains what actually happened in the scene that Cassius killed himself over. Titinius was indeed overtaken, but by friends of Brutus and Cassius on horseback. The shouts Pindarus heard were shouts of joy for Cassius's side. They overtook Titinius to put a wreath of victory on his head, which Brutus then wanted the rider to give to Cassius.
* Titinius still has the doomed crown, which, in a dramatic moment, he places on dead Cassius's head.
* Titinius then cries, "By your leave, gods! – this is a Roman's part," and proceeds to stab himself with Cassius's sword. Titinius dies beside his friend.
* Messala and Brutus arrive just in time to find that Titinius has played Ultimate Mourning and killed himself.
* Brutus cries out, "Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!" (He might be suggesting that the ghost is out convincing people to kill themselves, or he might be talking about his effect on the conspirators' consciences.)
* Brutus laments that two of Rome's bravest men should lie here this way. He prophetically calls Cassius "the last of all the Romans," meaning the last of the old school Romans that prefer death to subjugation. Brutus says he knows he ought to cry over Cassius, but now is not the time for crying.
* In the meantime, they decide not to hold the funerals in the camp, as funerals are no way to boost troop morale. Still, it's only 3 o'clock, which means there's time to try their luck against the enemy again, in the hopes something might be accomplished before dinnertime. Brutus gathers his remaining friends for the fight.
* Everyone goes out onto the battlefield in a blaze of glory. Young Cato runs around shouting his name as a challenge to anyone who stands for tyranny and against the Roman Republic.
* Lucilius is running around pretending to be Brutus.
* Some enemy soldiers unceremoniously kill Young Cato. They're ready to kill Lucilius too, but he says he's Brutus, and they should be honored to kill him.
* The soldiers take him prisoner and are excited to show off their catch to Antony. (They really believe he's Brutus.)
* The captive Lucilius tells Antony that no one will ever take Brutus alive. Lucilius promises that when Antony finds Brutus, whether alive or dead, he'll still be Brutus, with the same noble character and unchanged by these events.
* Antony tells his overeager soldiers that this guy isn't Brutus, but he's no less worth capturing. Antony orders the soldiers to keep Lucilius safe and to be kind to him, as he'd rather have such men for friends than enemies.
* Antony then sends some folks off to find out whether Brutus is alive or dead. He goes to Octavius's tent to hear news of how things are going.
* Elsewhere in the field, Brutus stops and asks his remaining friends to rest on a rock.
* He calls Clitus aside and asks him to do something in a whisper. Clitus declines to do the mystery deed, saying he'd rather kill himself.
* The process is repeated with Dardanius. The two men, Clitus and Dardanius, reveal to each other that Brutus has asked them to kill him.
* They share the news while Brutus tears up a little bit.
* Brutus calls Volumnius over now and tells him that Caesar's ghost has appeared to him twice, once at night and once again in the fields of Philippi. Brutus knows his hour has come and he would rather leap into the pit than loiter around and wait for his enemies to push him in.
* He asks Volumnius to kill him, since they were old friends from school. Volumnius points out that this is the very reason he can't do it.
* Just then the alarums (call to arms) are sounding, so Clitus urges everyone to get away before the enemy arrives.
* Brutus speaks to his men valiantly. He says that even though he has lost to Antony and Octavius, he will find more glory in this day than either of them can hope to achieve through their vile conquest of Rome. As the alarums continue to sound out, Brutus tells everyone to flee and promises to follow after everyone else has left.
* The only man left with Brutus now is Strato, who's slept through all the speeches and sadness. Strato has woken up just in time to be asked to hold Brutus's sword while he runs into it. Strato thinks this is a good idea and asks only to shake hands with Brutus before doing the deed.
* Brutus' final words assure that what he does now is twice as pure as what he did to Caesar, who is avenged by this act: "Caesar, now be still, I kill'd not thee with half so good a will."
* Antony, Octavius, and their armies, along with the captive Lucilius and Messala, now approach the site of Brutus's death.
* Messala asks Strato where their master is, and Strato says that Brutus is free.
* Only Brutus overcame Brutus, Strato says, and Brutus himself is the only one who gained honor in his death.
* There's a bit of a conference, and Octavius will entertain all the men who nobly served Brutus.
* Brutus's enemies are a lot friendlier to him now that he's dead. Antony declares Brutus the "noblest Roman" of them all, as he alone among the conspirators killed Caesar not out of envy but out of concern and care for the public good.
* Octavius says Brutus will be buried as an honorable soldier, and his body will stay in Octavius's tent for the night.
* After that, they agree it's time to celebrate and share "the glories of this happy day."