

Julius Caesar: The Dogs of War Meet on the Battlefield - Act 5, scene 1 (excerpt)

Brutus, Cassius, and their army enter to meet with Octavius Caesar and Marc Antony and their army prior to the battle. How would you stage this meeting of the generals?

BRUTUS

They stand, and would have parley.

talks, negotiations under truce

CASSIUS

Stand fast, Titinius: we must out and talk.

OCTAVIUS

Mark Antony, shall we give sign of battle?

ANTONY

No, Caesar, we will answer on their charge.
Make forth; the generals would have some words.

*wait until they charge
go forward*

OCTAVIUS

Stir not until the signal.

BRUTUS

Words before blows: is it so, countrymen?

OCTAVIUS

Not that we love words better, as you do.

BRUTUS

Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius.

blows

ANTONY

In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words:
Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart,
Crying 'Long live! Hail, Caesar!'

CASSIUS

Antony,
The posture of your blows are yet unknown
But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees,
And leave them honeyless.

*how you will strike, fight
your deceptive words after Caesar's murder / Sicilian town famous for honey*

ANTONY

Not stingless too.

BRUTUS

O, yes, and soundless too,
For you have stolen their buzzing, Antony,
And very wisely threat before you sting.

*spreading of rumours
threaten*

ANTONY

Villains, you did not so, when your vile daggers
Hacked one another in the sides of Caesar:
You showed your teeth like apes, and fawned like hounds,
And bowed like bondmen, kissing Caesar's feet;
Whilst damnèd Casca, like a cur, behind
Struck Caesar on the neck. O you flatterers!

give warning

grinned insincerely or showed hostility like fools

dog

CASSIUS

Flatterers? Now, Brutus, thank yourself.
This tongue had not offended so today,
If Cassius might have ruled.

If Cassius had had his way, Antony would have been killed along with Caesar

OCTAVIUS

Come, come, the cause. If arguing make us sweat,
The proof of it will turn to redder drops.
Look, I draw a sword against conspirators.
When think you that the sword goes up again?
Never, till Caesar's three and thirty wounds
Be well avenged, or till another Caesar
Have added slaughter to the sword of traitors.

*the central issue of the hostility
testing on the battlefield*

is sheathed

*myself
been killed by*

BRUTUS

Caesar, thou canst not die by traitors' hands
Unless thou bring'st them with thee.

those hands are your own

OCTAVIUS

So I hope:

I was not born to die on Brutus' sword.

BRUTUS

O, if thou wert the noblest of thy strain,
Young man, thou couldst not die more honourable.

family

more honourably than being killed by Brutus

CASSIUS

A peevish schoolboy, worthless of such honour,
Joined with a masquer and a reveller!

silly, childish

amateur actor, dancer / lover of parties

ANTONY

Old Cassius still.

OCTAVIUS

Come, Antony, away!

Defiance, traitors, hurl we in your teeth.
If you dare fight today, come to the field;
If not, when you have stomachs.

courage to fight on the battlefield

Exeunt OCTAVIUS, ANTONY, and their army