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CLASS: IX

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

Julius Caesar ACT 2, SC-1

### Synopsis

Brutus' raging mind is unable to let him sleep. He has still to make up his mind about the conspiracy against Caesar. He calls his slave-boy (Lucius) and orders him to light a candle in the study room. Lucius returns with the news that he has placed a candle in the study. He also gives a letter to Brutus. He had found it when he was searching the window for a candle. It is the anonymous letter which Cassius had written to incite Brutus to join the conspiracy. Brutus had already found several such letters earlier. He reads the letter, and then analyses his reasons for joining the conspiracy to murder Caesar. He realises that he has no personal reasons to murder Caesar; yet the citizens of Rome must be protected from the oppression of a tyrannical King. Brutus wants to kill Caesar for what he might become one day. Caesar cannot possibly have greater powers than he has at the moment of Brutus' contemplation, but he fails to recognise this fact.

Cassius arrives at Brutus' door with five other conspirators, Casca, Decius, Cinna, Metellus and Trebonius. Cassius updates Brutus with the progress of events while others discuss the time of sunrise.



CLASS : IX

Act 2, Sc-1

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

Brutus clasps the hands of the conspirators, but refuses to take an oath. They are all working for the good of the country and no oath is required among brothers. Brutus takes charge of the conspiracy, with able support from Cassius, because he wants Brutus at all costs. Brutus' integrity fails to see why Cassius wants an oath to be taken. By sunrise one of the conspirators will have betrayed their confidence to Artemidorus, who will unsuccessfully try to pass on the information to Caesar. The conspirators would have been exposed, had fate not intervened in their favour. Cassius wants Cicero to be included in the conspiracy.

All other conspirators agree. Brutus believes that Cicero will have nothing to do with an enterprise which has not been initiated by him. The other conspirators accept Brutus' veto because they regard him highly. Later in the play the group of conspirators realises how badly they need the masterful oratorical skills of Cicero, when Mark Antony so easily incites the citizens of Rome against the conspirators and forces them to flee from Rome.

Brutus, perhaps <sup>ignoring</sup> makes his biggest blunder by Cassius' desire to kill Mark Antony along with Caesar. Cassius sees the threat that Antony can be dangerous to the conspirators. Brutus wants that the conspirators should be called "purgers, not murderers." He also wrongfully believes that Mark Antony will be no



CLASS : IX

Act 2, Sc - 1

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

threat without Caesar. Later we will find out that events would put Brutus wrong when Antony would challenge them and win against them.

Cassius is not sure that Caesar will attend the senate meeting. Decius promises to lure Caesar to the Senate. Brutus decides that they must all meet at the Senate at the eighth hour. Metellus wants Cassius Ligarius to be included in the conspiracy. Brutus tells Metellus to get Ligarius to him and promises to persuade him to join the conspiracy. The conspirators leave Brutus' house at three o'clock. They decide to meet at Caesar's house.

Brutus, left alone, is joined by Portia. She is sad for not being taken into confidence. She is also worried about Brutus, because of late he has been moody, aloof and sleepless. She invokes her right as a wife to know the secrets of his mind. She tells him that she is Cato's daughter. Her father was the heart and giant of Roman public life. Moreover, she is his wife. She reveals to Brutus a voluntary wound (injury) that she had made on her thigh in order to prove that she can bear her husband's secrets. Brutus is deeply touched. He promises to share his secrets with her.

They are disturbed by the arrival of Ligarius. His head is in bandage. He has been ill, but he has risen from his bed in order to have a word with Brutus. Brutus tells him that the enterprise he has in mind is of

CLASS : IX

Act 2, Sc-1

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE

great importance. Ligarius has a hint of what it may be. He removes his bandages as Brutus tells him to follow him, obviously with the intent of telling him everything.