Julius Caesar : Act III.1 'Antony's Funeral Speech'

We begin the action just after Brutus has excused the infamous murder of Julius Caesar by the senate. The citizens are a rowdy mob, volatile and unpredictable, but with great skill and rhetoric Brutus has managed to convince them that Caesar was tyrant and despite being a great general of Rome, needed to die for the people's sake. Antony was Caesar's protege, notoriously loyal. After coming across the bloody scene in the senate, he pretends to be in support of the wicked senator's actions but secretly he has informed the audience that he is bubbling with furious rage inside. Somehow, he has managed to convince Brutus – under the pretence of being a supporter of the murder – that he should be able to speak at the funeral. I say funeral, really I mean to the riotous mob that has gathered in the street since Caesar was killed. The script begins just after Brutus has managed to gain the support of the people and now is allowing Antony to say a few words for the departed. Remember, 'ambition' was a great sin in the eyes of the public...

First Citizen

Stay, ho! and let us hear Mark Antony.

Third Citizen

Let him go up into the public chair;
We'll hear him. Noble Antony, go up.

Goes into the pulpit

First Citizen

This Caesar was a tyrant.

Third Citizen

Nay, that's certain:
We are blest that Rome is rid of him.

Second Citizen

Peace! let us hear what Antony can say.

Antony

You gentle Romans,—

Citizens

Peace, ho! let us hear him.

Antony

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

First Citizen
Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

Second Citizen
If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Caesar has had great wrong.

Third Citizen
Has he, masters?
I fear there will a worse come in his place.

Fourth Citizen
Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.

First Citizen
If it be found so, some will dear abide it.

Second Citizen
Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire with weeping.

Third Citizen
There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.
Fourth Citizen

Now mark him, he begins again to speak.

Antony

But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there.
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who, you all know, are honourable men:
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Than I will wrong such honourable men.
But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;
I found it in his closet, 'tis his will:
Let but the commons hear this testament--
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read--
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue.

Fourth Citizen

We'll hear the will: read it, Mark Antony.

All

The will, the will! we will hear Caesar's will.

Antony

Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;
It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;
And, being men, bearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;
For, if you should, O, what would come of it!

Fourth Citizen

Read the will; we'll hear it, Antony;
You shall read us the will, Caesar's will.

Antony

Will you be patient? will you stay awhile?
I have o'ershoot myself to tell you of it:
I fear I wrong the honourable men
Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it.

Fourth Citizen

They were traitors: honourable men!

All

The will! the testament!
Second Citizen
They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will.

Antony
You will compel me, then, to read the will?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend? and will you give me leave?

Several Citizens
Come down.

Second Citizen
Descend.

Third Citizen
You shall have leave.

Antony comes down

Fourth Citizen
A ring; stand round.

First Citizen
Stand from the hearse, stand from the body.

Second Citizen
Room for Antony, most noble Antony.

Antony
Nay, press not so upon me; stand far off.

Several Citizens
Stand back; room; bear back.

Antony
If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,  
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,  
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.  
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!  
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,  
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.  
O, now you weep; and, I perceive, you feel  
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.  
Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold  
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,  
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

First Citizen  
O piteous spectacle!

Second Citizen  
O noble Caesar!

Third Citizen  
O woful day!

Fourth Citizen  
O traitors, villains!

First Citizen  
O most bloody sight!

Second Citizen  
We will be revenged.

All  
Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!  
Let not a traitor live!

Find the full script and all the others at: http://shakespeare.mit.edu/