

CRY HAVOC! (ASK QUESTIONS LATER)

EPISODE 1 - AFTER CAESAR

Written by

David K. Barnes

Recording Script (Version 6.0)

Cast

MARK ~ KAZEEM TOSIN AMORE

GAIUS ~ HARRY ROEBUCK

CHARMIAN ~ SARAH AGHA

CLEOPATRA ~ LARA SAWALHA

OCTAVIA ~ SARAH LAMBIE

LEPIDUS ~ ANDY SECOMBE

FULVIA ~ BETH EYRE

PTOLEMY ~ AHMED ALJABRY

DRUSUS ~ PIP GLADWIN

RUFUS ~ MARK THOMPSON

LUCIUS ~ HARRY ROEBUCK

A FLAME flickers into life.

The luxurious private quarters of Queen CLEOPATRA, with an atmosphere of reverence. This opening has stylistic elements, as CHARMIAN tells a story both to us and to her Queen. We won't know it's Cleopatra yet - though we might guess.

Charmian BREATHES deeply and slowly, preparing herself.

Then she begins.

CHARMIAN

Not long ago, in a distant land,
there lived a warrior, of great and
noble deeds. He wished to rule the
people of his city as their King.

Distant CROWD ROAR; non-diegetic (slight echo / reverb?).

CHARMIAN (CONT'D)

But his friends didn't think it was
a good idea. So they killed him.

PLUNGING OF DAGGERS. The FALL OF A BODY. Non-diegetic.

Beat.

CHARMIAN (CONT'D)

Er... That's right, isn't it?

CLEOPATRA

(wry smile)
Broadly.

CHARMIAN

I don't want to get the facts
wrong.

CLEOPATRA

Don't worry about those. Just tell
me the story.

Cleopatra RECLINES on her pillows. She's the most powerful woman in the world, having a quiet night in.

CHARMIAN

(still nervous)
Alright. Well...

She continues her tale.

CHARMIAN (CONT'D)
 They ran away - the killers, I mean
 - to the plains of Philippi.

Many Roman soldiers MARCHING, under...

CHARMIAN (CONT'D)
 There they raised an army. They
 knew they'd soon be followed, for
 two men sought revenge against
 their crime. Two men forged in
 opposites: the first strong of
 muscle, the second strong of mind.
 United in common cause.

Soldier atmos fades.

CLEOPATRA
 And what did these two men do?

CHARMIAN
 Basically... they won.

2

EXT. FIELDS OF PHILIPPI - DAY

2

A ROAR of victory from many thousand troops. Their General,
 MARK ANTONY, man of the people, addresses them.

MARK
 We did it, lads! We bloody did it!

The soldiers ROAR, rhythmically BANGING SWORDS AGAINST
 SHIELDS.

SOLDIERS
 Mark! Antony! Mark! Antony!(etc)

Mark soaks in adulation, LAUGHNG. He motions them to silence.

MARK
 Alright, alright...! Now. You know
 I'm not much of a speaker.

The soldiers CHUCKLE KNOWINGLY - he is a great speaker.

MARK (CONT'D)
 I never even passed my Latin! But
 if any occasion deserved a few
 words it's this one, because you
 boys were incredible out there! I
 mean that was peak performance!

APPRECIATIVE LAUGHTER from the soldiers.

MARK (CONT'D)

Rome is proud of each and every one of you here today. And that goes double from me. This was no ordinary war. We fought no foreign enemy. These were Romans, like you and me. Some may even have been our friends, once.

A solemn hush.

MARK (CONT'D)

I wouldn't have blamed you for finding this one a struggle, if you'd put down your swords and said, "This far and no further."

Stirring them up again.

MARK (CONT'D)

But. Each of you put his duty first! You fought like lions! And Brutus may have been an honourable man but we bloody well showed him a thing or two, didn't we, eh?!

ROAR. A quick burst of SWORDS ON SHIELDS, breaking up into excited CHATTERING, under...

MARK (CONT'D)

My old mate Julius is looking down upon us, and he saw justice done this day! And here standing with me, at my side, is his very own son. He fought with us, he's your friend and mine - he's Gaius... Octavius... Caesar!

Soldiers CHEER.

Beat.

GAIUS

(nervous)

Hello everyone.

Painful beat. Mark steps in to help.

MARK

Oh son of the divine Julius Caesar, inheritor of his titles and estates, have you anything to add on this day of victory?

Me? GAIUS

Yes. MARK

GAIUS feels the eyes of thousands of men. Rabbit in the headlights.

Er. GAIUS

Pause.

Anything? On this august occasion? MARK

Beat.

Er. GAIUS

Beat.

No. GAIUS (CONT'D)

Beat. A COUGH from the crowd.

No, I think you just about covered everything. Yep. GAIUS (CONT'D)

Mark leans in CLOSE for a hushed word.

(annoyed) MARK
What's the matter?

There's... just so many of them. GAIUS
Just. Looking at me.

And? MARK

I've... I've lost my voice. GAIUS

(firm, annoyed) MARK
You'll lose more than your voice if you don't say something inspiring. Well go on, give it some!

Gaius tries and fails to address the men impressively.

GAIUS

Er. That is to say... I have
nothing else to add but... Well
done! You men. Well done.

(swallows)

Yes.

The soldiers MURMUR uncertainly. Ripple of POLITE CLAPPING.
Mark tries to salvage this.

MARK

Well. The son of the divine
Julius... has spoken. And, er, now
that's done with... we celebrate!
WHO WANTS TO GO AND GET HAMMERED?

Huge ROAR of appreciation, the biggest yet. The soldiers
DISPERSE to begin partying.

GAIUS

(hopefully)

That went well, I thought?

MARK

(forced smile)

Yeah. Sure.

Mark PATS Gaius's shoulder as he MOVES AWAY. Smile drops.

MARK (CONT'D)

(muttered)

What a plank.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)

Rome's enemies lay vanquished in
the field, and there were no more
left to fight. Mark Antony and
Gaius Octavius had won. Rome was
theirs to rule... And that's when
their troubles would really begin.

TITLES AND THEME MUSIC

ANNOUNCER

'Cry Havoc (Ask Questions Later)'
created by David K. Barnes. Episode
1: 'After Caesar'

3

EXT. PLAZA, ROME - DAY

3

We're back in Rome for a city-wide knees-up. CHEERING. SOLDIERS and CITIZENS celebrating, laughing, drinking, dancing. Some music.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)

The armies returned to Rome in triumph, and there was much rejoicing. General Mark Antony embraced his loving wife - the model of a Roman woman.

MARK

Fulvia!!

FULVIA

Mark!!

FULVIA RUNS INTO HIS ARMS; he GRUNTS from the impact.

FULVIA (CONT'D)

Oh Mark I missed you so!

Covering him with KISSES.

MARK

And I missed you, my love!

SOLDIERS

Awww.

The watching soldiers APPLAUD. Mark and Fulvia LAUGH GAILY, putting on a good show. But close together, they can talk properly. Hurriedly, conspiratorially.

FULVIA

How'd it go out there?

MARK

Fine, it was dead easy. You'd have loved it. Lots of big, handsome men working up a sweat.

FULVIA

No problems with the army?

MARK

They'll do whatever I tell 'em.

FULVIA

So it's over then? Rome is ours?

MARK

Yep.

FULVIA

(squeal of delight)

Fulvia EMBRACES Mark TIGHTLY. The watching soldiers CHUCKLE.

MARK

She can't keep her hands off me,
lads!

(to Fulvia, close)

The Senate's already ratified it.
As from now, I'm running the show.

FULVIA

Yes!! Finally we can get things
done around here! Just you and me.
Oh Mark!

MARK

I mean it's a bit more complicated,
but basically yes.

FULVIA

(smile frozen)

What do you mean? Are you in charge
or not?

MARK

Yeah! Absolutely.
(beat)
... Me and Gaius.

FULVIA

You and Gaius?!

MARK

Yeah. Julie's boy.

FULVIA

I know who he is! You said you were
going to kill him!

MARK

Yeah I know, I know...

A SOLDIER, DRUSUS, PASSES.

DRUSUS

Hey Mark, you're the best!

MARK & FULVIA SNAP BACK TO A SHOW OF HAPPINESS.

MARK
(laugh)
Yes I am, thank you.

FULVIA
(laughs gaily)

Then close again, hurried, hushed.

FULVIA (CONT'D)
You promised me you'd kill him.

MARK
I can't do that.

FULVIA
Why not?

MARK
Cos Julie was a mate of mine and
you don't kill a best mate's son.
No matter how annoying he is.

FULVIA
Adopted son. You owe him nothing.

MARK
Oh he's harmless, he's a whelp.
There's nothing he can do to us.

FULVIA
(quick)
Kill him.

MARK
No.

FULVIA
(sighs)

MARK
We're still a Republic! I can't
just take it over by myself can I?

FULVIA
How do you know if you won't try?

MARK
Julie tried and look what happened
to him. Is that what you want for
me? Lying in the forum with swords
in my back? Thank you very much.

FULVIA

You should rule. You deserve it.
Rome deserves it. Quite frankly, I
deserve it.

MARK

Look look look, don't worry. It's
all working exactly as we wanted
it. I am in charge. I'm Mark
Antony, they love me.

FULVIA

And Gaius?

MARK

The boy's a wash-out, he's got no
clue at all. You wait, I've got him
wrapped around my little finger.
Just like I'm wrapped around yours.

Fulvia accepts this - for now.

FULVIA

You'd better be right.

MARK

When have I ever been wrong? Now
keep kissing me, they're still
watching.

FULVIA

No they're not.

MARK

(lascivious)
Well. Pretend they are.

FULVIA

(lascivious laugh)

The MUSIC comes to the foreground as we transition...

4

EXT. PLAZA, ROME - NIGHT

4

DRINKING and DANCING. Like the last hour of a ghastly wedding
reception.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)

The celebrations continued long
into the night. Some say the Romans
go to war so they can justify the
orgy afterwards.

CLEOPATRA (V.O.)
 'Some say?'

CHARMIAN (V.O.)
 Well. I do, yeah. And the more
 blood spilt, the more they enjoy
 it. Sort of like a fetish.

Partying recedes into the background. In the foreground,
 GAIUS sits alone reading SCROLLS, near a CRACKLING FIRE.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)
 But one man sat alone, away from
 the throng. Gaius Octavius didn't
 know how to party. He knew only how
 to think.

GAIUS
 (reading, muttering)
 No... no, this doesn't make any
 sense... What did it say in that
 other one...?

He HURRIEDLY BROWSES a pile of SCROLLS. Mark APPROACHES.

MARK
 (calls)
 Gaius!

GAIUS
 (looks up)
 What-?... Oh. Hello Mark.

Mark is somewhat drunk, but benevolent.

MARK
 What are you doing! Come and join
 the gang!

GAIUS
 Oh, er, later maybe, later. Mark,
 come and take a look at this. Look.

He's totally wrapped up in admin. MARK can't believe it, but
 also can.

MARK
 You're working.

GAIUS
 Thought I'd get a head start. Look
 what I've found. It's maddening.

MARK

Can I sit?

GAIUS

Sure, let me just...

He PUSHES SOME SCROLLS out of the way, clearing a space, as MARK SITS heavily in his soldier's uniform, talking all the while.

MARK

My son's around here somewhere. I told him to spend the night with his grandparents. Fulvia and I want some privacy tonight, heh heh...

GAIUS

Goodo. You see here, I found an executive summary from our governor in Syria, and in it he says-

MARK

Have some wine.

GAIUS

What?

MARK

Wine.

MARK passes a SLOSHING CUP OF WINE. Gaius TAKES it.

GAIUS

Oh, thank you. Anyway, he says - the governor - they're paying far more in interest to the Publicani than we're actually making back in taxation-

MARK

(bland)
Really.

GAIUS

Yes, and they're still running up debts like you wouldn't believe.

He's FLICKING through some scrolls.

MARK

Gaius.

GAIUS
And the magistrate's collecting a
back-hander - I mean we have to
stop this, it's appalling-

MARK
Gaius.

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)
Put your papers down and understand
one simple thing.

Mark LEANS IN; CREAK OF ARMOUR / TUNIC. Smiling.

MARK (CONT'D)
We did it.

GAIUS
(blinks)
What?

MARK
(taking his time)
Rome. Us. We did it.

GAIUS
We did it?

MARK
We. Did it.

GAIUS
(slowly getting it)
.... We did it...

MARK
Mmhmm.

GAIUS
(smiling)
I guess... we did it. Didn't we?

MARK
Now you're thinking straight.

Both grinning. This is the happiest they'll ever be together.

MARK (CONT'D)
You know why they're all happy
tonight? Those people? Our people?
You know why?

GAIUS

Tell me.

MARK

Because we get stuff done, my friend. We get stuff done. That's what we do. We're unstoppable.

GAIUS

Well. I'll drink to that!

He LIFTS HIS WINE (slosh).

GAIUS (CONT'D)

To the Republic!

MARK

If you like.

They CLINK CUPS. Gaius SIPS. Mark GULPS.

GAIUS

Do you think Caesar... I mean, my father, my new father - still feels weird by the way.

MARK

You'll get used to it.

GAIUS

Do you think he really wanted to be a king?

MARK

Doesn't matter.

GAIUS

No?

MARK

No. What does matter is that the scum who killed him are dead in the ground, and we're still here. How many did you kill?

GAIUS

Eh?

MARK

The enemy. How many?

GAIUS

(not many)
Oh, uh... I lost count. You?

MARK
(mental arithmetic)
Two hundred and... sixty-nine.
Nice.

GAIUS
What is?

Mark LAUGHS. CLAPS Gaius on the back, a bit heavily.

MARK
Never mind, young Gaius, it's all
over now! No more civil wars for
us. You're not much of a fighter,
on the quiet, are you?

GAIUS
Well...

MARK
It's OK. You don't have to be.
You're the son of Caesar, right?
The men respect that.

GAIUS
Yes.

MARK
But I know how you feel.

GAIUS
You do?

MARK
Oh yeah. I was new once. Rome's a
tough world. Hard to be the bloke
who doesn't get his head kicked in.

GAIUS
I suppose so, yes.

MARK
But look. For whatever reason,
Julie adopted you to be his son,
and that means something. I don't
know what, but it does. And as sure
as his divine spirit is looking
over us, I just want you to know...
that I'm looking out for you too.

Beat. He's trying so hard to look magnanimous.

MARK (CONT'D)
It's going to be OK.

GAIUS
(genuine)
Thanks Mark. That means a lot.

MARK
No worries, friend. And in the days ahead, when it's all going on, doing this and that, well... You know you can leave it to me, if you ever need to. All this. It's never too much trouble. Alright?

GAIUS
(uncertain)
... Yeah.

MARK
Good.

A single light CLAP on the back.

MARK (CONT'D)
Now come on. It's time to enjoy yourself. Plenty of fish in the sea looking for a hot strong war hero tonight.

He STANDS unsteadily.

MARK (CONT'D)
Gaius?

GAIUS
I was just thinking.

MARK
It can wait till tomorrow.

GAIUS
It's simply that-

MARK
No! Come on! We've won! Right now, you and me are the most powerful men in the world. We own the entire Republic of Rome.

GAIUS
Ye-es...

MARK
So?

GAIUS

What are we going to do with it?

The fire goes on CRACKLING. In a stylistic flourish, the flames get stronger. It gets louder and louder until... EXTINGUISHED. The party's over.

5

INT. CLEOPATRA'S QUARTERS - EVENING

5

CLEOPATRA

You never met Julius, did you?

CHARMIAN

No. Well, I served him dates once, but we never spoke... What was he like? If you don't mind me asking.

CLEOPATRA

Caesar? He was...

Pause. Almost wistful.

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

Honest. In his own way.

CHARMIAN

Do you think he'd have made a good king?

CLEOPATRA

The Romans don't believe in them. To be honest, nor do I. On that subject, when is our visitor arriving?

CHARMIAN

I believe their ship docked nearby not too long ago. Should I leave you to prepare?

CLEOPATRA

Oh no, no, I'm ready for him...

Cleopatra lazily proffers a PLATE of cakes.

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

Would you like a honey cake?

CHARMIAN

Are you sure? ... Thank you!

They both MUNCH on a crisp honey cake.

CLEOPATRA

(eating)

Resume your story. It helps me to think. Where were we?

CHARMIAN

(swallows)

The morning after.

6

INT. GAIUS'S OFFICE - MORNING

6

Gaius's home on the Palatine Hill. His private office. GAIUS is standing at his desk, FUSSING over some scrolls.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)

It was a new dawn for Rome, free from internal strife. Gaius Octavius and Mark Antony were due to meet to begin their governance in earnest, and Gaius was well prepared. He doubtless spoke of it with his sister, Octavia; known to all as the epitome of virtue.

OCTAVIA ENTERS, SANDALS ON MARBLE. She's only recently woken up after a long night's drinking.

OCTAVIA

Hey Gaius. Don't talk too much; I'm still a bit trashed.

Gaius gives her the briefest disapproving look.

GAIUS

Morning.

He spends much of their conversation looking at his work.

OCTAVIA

(big yawn)

What time is it?

GAIUS

Sundial's outside if you want to look.

OCTAVIA lazily WALKS further in.

OCTAVIA

Didn't see you out celebrating last night. Surprise surprise. Can't even show up for your own party.

GAIUS
I was there. Briefly.

OCTAVIA
You do know it was all for you.

GAIUS
It was for the armies of Rome and
their commanders.

OCTAVIA
Including you.

GAIUS
(bitter hint)
But mainly Mark.

OCTAVIA
Well of course. They like him.

He THROWS DOWN A SCROLL and MOVES AROUND THE DESK, agitated.

GAIUS
(exasperated noise)
Where's the new girl? She's meant
to have tidied up in here. Look at
my desk, it's filthy.

OCTAVIA
She's still in bed.

GAIUS
In bed?

OCTAVIA
Yes, leave her, Gaius. We had a
very long night.

GAIUS
(sharp sigh)
I see.

OCTAVIA
(yawning)
I think she'll work out.

GAIUS
Not interested, to be honest, thank
you Octavia.

OCTAVIA
Oh, don't be such a prude. You'd
understand if you could only find
yourself a nice... anyone!

GAIUS

Perhaps I'm pickier than you are.
It'd be impossible not to be,
wouldn't it?

An unruffled OCTAVIA CROSSES OVER to the desk.

OCTAVIA

What is all this anyway? Reading
anything good?

GAIUS

Corsican tax revenue for the past
five years. Very important.

OCTAVIA

(how boring)

I'm sure it is. I know how your
heart leaps at the sight of a
finely written receipt.

GAIUS

I have responsibilities now. You
may not have noticed. Oh, and I
found this amongst my papers.

Gaius TAKES OUT the offending SCROLL from a stack of them.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

If you could keep your hobbies away
from my work...

OCTAVIA

What is it?

GAIUS

"The Palatine Players began their
new season with a riotous revival
of Plautus's comedy classic
Asinaria, or The One with the
Asses, which in this critic's
opinion has rarely been blah blah
blah blah..."

DROPS IT on his desk.

OCTAVIA

Hey, no, keep reading! It's a good
review!

GAIUS

(scorn)

The One with the Asses? I hope you
mean donkeys.

OCTAVIA

See the play and find out. We've been doing ever so well lately. Sell out nights across the board. Though I sometimes think we rest on our laurels - pardon the phrase.

GAIUS tries to focus on his work.

GAIUS

It's just a theatre company.

OCTAVIA

It's my theatre company.

GAIUS

No it isn't.

OCTAVIA

I pay for it. That makes it my company! You wanted me to be a patron of the arts, and I'm doing it.

GAIUS

It's the wrong sort of art. I should have had that bunch of parasites shut down years ago.

OCTAVIA

You can't. They're too popular.

GAIUS

But they're always slipping in jokes about me!

OCTAVIA

Naturally; they get the biggest laughs! Gaius, if you give the people entertainment, and a way to blow off steam now and then-

GAIUS

Then you make them restless.

OCTAVIA

You make them happy. I'm sure I'm doing more for Rome with my plays than you are with all your dull reports.

She KNOCKS a stack over onto the desk; PAPERS everywhere.

GAIUS
Stop it, that's my in-tray!

KNOCK at the open door. It's LEPIDUS, a good-natured old
buffer who has survived decades of politics through barely
understanding anything.

GAIUS (CONT'D)
(sharp)
What is it?

LEPIDUS
Hello there! Only me!

GAIUS
Oh, Lepidus. Good morning.

LEPIDUS
Your servants let me in. Not
disturbing you, am I?

GAIUS
No, not at all, please, make
yourself at home. We'll be setting
up in the dining room.

LEPIDUS
Oh! Going to eat, are we?

GAIUS
Er, no. Sorry.

LEPIDUS
(note of disappointment)
Oh. Shame. Still, raring to go!
Getting stuck in, what?

GAIUS
That's right, in you go, won't be a
moment.

Lepidus exits, CHUCKLING good-naturedly.

OCTAVIA
(hushed)
Lepidus?

GAIUS
(knew she'd make fun)
Yes.

OCTAVIA
Seriously, Lepidus? He's in the
gang?

GAIUS
He was a key part of our victory.

OCTAVIA
But he's such a fool.

GAIUS
Even fools have their uses.
Especially when they're well
connected.

OCTAVIA
(laughing)
Does Mark know about this? He'll
hit the roof. He'll tear the old
man apart.

GAIUS
No he won't. He knows already.
(doubt)
I think.

OCTAVIA
Why bother with Mark anyway? He's
popular, but he doesn't know the
first thing about government.

GAIUS
Now, that isn't fair. I spoke to
him last night. He may be full of
himself, yes, but he cares about
Rome and he's taking this very
seriously. I know he is.

OCTAVIA
(smug)
Ah. So why isn't he here yet?

7

EXT. ROMAN FORUM - MORNING

7

A ROWDY group of SOLDIERS drinking, with Mark in their midst.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)
Mark Antony was nearby. He'd been
waylaid by friends, that was all.

Mark DRINKS a massive vessel of WINE, SPILLING everywhere.

SOLDIERS
Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug! (etc)

Mark FINISHES the vessel, triumphantly. SMACKS LIPS.

MARK

Howzat?

HUGE CHEER from soldiers. Bigger BELCH from Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)

Now someone pour me a proper drink!

Soldiers LAUGH.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oop, hang on. Duty calls. It's my first day at work, don't ya' know!

CHEERS and CHUCKLES from the happy throng of soldiers.

LUCIUS

(off)

You'll show them who's boss!

MARK

You bet I will! Wish me luck, lads! What I do, I do for Rome!

More CHUCKLING.

RUFUS

When are we getting paid?

All chuckling STOPS. Awkward silence.

MARK

... What's that?

Another soldier, RUFUS, nervously STEPS FORWARD.

RUFUS

It's just, er... After the campaign we just had... and everything...

Drusus STEPS FORWARD.

DRUSUS

You see, sir, none of us are wealthy men. And we was sort of looking forward to getting what's owed to us.

Mark has never considered this.

MARK

What's owed to you.

DRUSUS

Yeah. Like, the rest of our wages.
And the bonus you mentioned.

RUFUS

We all want to buy some land to
call our own, you see. Settle down,
run farms, raise our families.

MARK

Right, yes...

DRUSUS

And not being funny or anything,
but there's not much food kicking
about, and we're all hungry.

RUFUS

Yeah, you can hardly even find
bread these days.

DRUSUS

I want a massive pie.

Mark is totally out at sea.

MARK

Well, yes, of course. Wages. Land.
Food. Goes without saying.

DRUSUS

Yeah! So.

RUFUS

When do you reckon we might get all
that?

Silence.

MARK

Er.

DRUSUS

We know you won't let us down, sir.

MARK

No. No, I will not do that. No.
Definitely not.

Pause.

MARK (CONT'D)

It's just that-

LUCIUS
 (back of the group)
 He's letting us down!

Surge of HOSTILITY.

MARK
 No no no, on the contrary, my
 friends! On the contrary. Please!

HOSTILITY DIES DOWN. A drunken Mark tries to rally them.

MARK (CONT'D)
 You see I'm going to, er... I'm
 er... I'm going into that meeting,
 right now - the first of a new and
 improved Republic - to sit with-

He BURPS.

MARK (CONT'D)
 'scuse me - with Gaius Octavius,
 son of the divine Julie Caesar...
 and I will see to it PERSONALLY...
 that you get your money, and food,
 and everything you need...
 immediately! Straight away. NOW.

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)
 How... how's that sound?

Soldiers CHEER. They chant.

SOLDIERS
 Mark! Antony! Mark! Antony!(etc)

Mark EXHALES with nervous relief.

MARK
 (to self)
 OK, that worked. Now. Which way am
 I going?

Mark STUMBLES away.

CHARMIAN (V.O.)
 As the general sought out the home
 of Gaius Octavius, his new
 colleagues awaited him with eager
 anticipation.

8

INT. GAIUS'S DINING ROOM - MORNING

8

Gaius and Lepidus waiting. Gaius SLOWLY DRUMMING HIS FINGERS on the table. Lepidus CLEARS HIS THROAT and COUGHS quietly, not trying to seek attention. After a bit, GAIUS SIGHS and LEANS back in his chair.

LEPIDUS

Oh, my aunt was asking after you.

Beat. Gaius is so bored he's forgotten what conversation is.

GAIUS

Sorry?

LEPIDUS

My aunt Claudia. She wanted to know if you were keeping well.

GAIUS

Oh. Good.

A lazy beat, with no subtext.

LEPIDUS

I said you were.

GAIUS

Yes.

LEPIDUS

Hope that's alright. You know. Saying that.

GAIUS

(puzzled)

Sure.

LEPIDUS

Ah, good. Thought I might've said too much. Careless talk costs lives, and all that.

Can Gaius be bothered to ask what he's on about?

GAIUS

I... Sure, yeah.

Beat.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Good thinking.

THWACK as the doors open, and SMACK against the wall. Mark STUMBLES into the room.

MARK

Finally! I swear this hill isn't normally here.

GAIUS

Ah, Mark. Good morning!

MARK

(laddish)

There he is! My boy!

Mark LAUGHS, advancing on Gaius and giving him a matey HUG with SMACKS ON THE BACK.

MARK (CONT'D)

Great to see you, friend. Exciting, yeah? All this? Exciting.

Gaius suspects Mark is drunk. Diplomatically, he won't mention it yet.

GAIUS

Yes, it is. Er, you know Lepidus of course.

MARK

What? Oh, yeah. Morning-

Mark BELCHES.

MARK (CONT'D)

- sorry.

LEPIDUS

That's alright.

MARK

Grand. So, er... Um...

His mind goes blank. Nearly unconscious.

GAIUS

Take a seat?

MARK

Yes! Now that you mention it. Cheers. Any of them?

GAIUS

Any one, yep.

Mark pulls out a CHAIR and pours himself heavily into it.

MARK

Wow, that's better. Augh!

GAIUS

OK, I think we'll start. Do help yourself to refreshments - and there's a bowl of figs there, if anyone's hungry.

LEPIDUS

Aha!

Mark TAKES the BOWL.

MARK

I'll take those.

LEPIDUS

Oh.

MARK

Absolutely starving.

He BELCHES LOUDLY.

MARK (CONT'D)

Blimey!

He MUNCHES on some figs.

GAIUS

Um... Mark?

MARK

(mouth full)

Mmm?

GAIUS

I'm not trying to put you on the spot here, but are you... drunk?

Mark SWALLOWS his figs.

MARK

(secretive grin)

Well. I might be. Who can say?

Beat.

GAIUS

I mean, we can. Because you look really drunk.

MARK

I can keep up with the chat, don't you worry. The cogs are whirring.

GAIUS

Are you sure?

MARK

Yeah. Crack on.

MUNCHING figs. Gaius tries to strike a friendly but professional note.

GAIUS

OK, well, greetings both of you, to what I'm sure will be the first of many... stimulating and productive meetings about the running of our glorious Republic.

Mark SLAPS THE TABLE several times.

MARK

Yes! Stirring stuff!

LEPIDUS

Oh yes. Top drawer.

GAIUS

Thank you. We are, er... we are great men. I, Gaius Octavius, son of the divine Caesar. Mark Antony, general of the armies of Rome.

MARK

That's me.

GAIUS

And Aemilius Lepidus, without whom we could never have raised the capital to raise the armies! The Roman State owes you a great deal.

LEPIDUS

Pleasure, pleasure. Nice to be involved!

GAIUS

The future prosperity of the Roman Republic now rests between the three of us, and we will succeed.

MARK

Wait, hold on. This bloke's working with us?

GAIUS

Yes.

MARK

You mean, he's in charge, like us?

GAIUS

What did you think he was doing here?

MARK

I thought he was the secretary.

Beat. He's serious.

MARK (CONT'D)

Like, taking the minutes.

GAIUS

No.

LEPIDUS

I can do that too if it'd be useful?

GAIUS

No no, it's fine. Mark, we agreed that Lepidus would join us. That's what the Senate ratified yesterday. We're a triumvirate.

MARK

A what?

GAIUS

Triumvirate. Three of us. To make sure that supreme power never gets concentrated in any one person. They think it's safer that way.

Beat.

MARK

Three of us?

GAIUS

Yes.

Beat.

MARK
(big sigh)

He HEADDESK's the TABLE.

GAIUS
Are you alright, Mark? You've
smacked your head on the table.

MARK
(head down on table)
I know. Carry on.

Beat.

GAIUS
OK. Well, as the ruling triumvirate
of the Republic of Rome, we face
many challenges, as we all know.

LEPIDUS
(agreeing)
Mmm, yes.

GAIUS
We must strive to meet them, for
the good of the people of Rome, and
also, to be fair, for us. So-

MARK
(sudden)
Land!

GAIUS
What?

Mark is so drunk.

MARK
They want to buy land. The
soldiers. And food. Money and food.

GAIUS
... Right, well, that is actually
at the top of our agenda today.
Thank you, Mark.

MARK
Welcome.

GAIUS

Thanks to Lepidus, we covered the initial costs of our most recent campaign, against the killers of my late, divine father-

LEPIDUS

Lovely man.

GAIUS

Yep - but now we need to pay off the rest of it, to the tune of...

FLICKS over a paper to read it.

GAIUS (CONT'D)

Approximately three hundred million sesterces.

Mark nearly falls out of his chair.

MARK

How much?!

GAIUS

It's a big army, it costs a lot.

LEPIDUS

What have we got in the coffers?

GAIUS

Not much. In fact, not only are we low on money, but we are also facing... a massive food shortage.

LEPIDUS

Oh dear.

MARK

You're joking?

GAIUS

No. So, while we tackle that growing problem, we're also looking for a way to settle our account with the armies before they get... restless. Lepidus, do you have any ideas on that front?

LEPIDUS

Ah, now, I was thinking about this, and er, no, I haven't. Nothing.

GAIUS

... OK.

LEPIDUS

Sorry.

GAIUS

No, it's a tough problem.

LEPIDUS

I suppose Rome wasn't built in a day!

(laughs, then seeks confirmation)

Was it?

MARK

Look, the way I see it...

Mark is trying to concentrate through the drunken haze.

MARK (CONT'D)

We need... stuff. Right? And we don't have it.

GAIUS

Correct.

MARK

Then. Let's take it from people who do. Simple.

SLAPS TABLE. Point made.

GAIUS

Well actually, as it happens, I've been looking through our treaties with neighbouring kingdoms, and I think Egypt is the best shout.

MARK

Done.

Gaius UNROLLS THE TREATY.

GAIUS

As we can see from the treaty, they've got grain and gold aplenty, and they might even have land for any men who want to live there.

LEPIDUS

Living abroad. Nice idea.

GAIUS

So I move that we open diplomatic channels with Queen Cleopatra immediately. All in favour?

MARK

Diplomatic channels? I'm not talking about having a talk, I'm talking about not talking. And acting. Instead.

GAIUS

(deep breath)

I'm sure Cleopatra will be amenable to our needs after some polite conversation.

MARK

That Egyptian harlot? You can't trust her.

GAIUS

The Egyptian Queen, yes, we can.

MARK

Mate, we've garrisons in Egypt. We can take what we need by force.

GAIUS

We had to recall our men from Egypt to fight at Philippi.

MARK

We'll send them back! We can win any war. Our armies are unbeatable.

GAIUS

These would be the armies we haven't paid yet for the last war they fought for us?

LEPIDUS

I don't suppose they'd take it on credit?

GAIUS

I doubt it. I say if we want the resources of Egypt then diplomatic overtures to Cleopatra is the best way forward at the present time. All in favour?

MARK

May one speak?

GAIUS

Please. Everyone's opinion here is equally important. Go ahead.

MARK

Your idea stinks.

GAIUS

Right.

Mark STANDS, threateningly but unsteadily.

MARK

We are Romans. We don't ask. If we need something, we take it. That's the way it's always been.

GAIUS

And I'm sure it will be again, but right now we've got to regroup, to rebuild, so we can ride this out.

MARK

And how long will that take?

GAIUS

I expect a few months. That's why we need to start-

MARK

Months?! Those men out there won't wait months! They need paying now!

GAIUS

Mark, Rome hasn't any money! It hasn't any food! We have nothing to offer these men, unless we can-

MARK

You're worse than the Senate! Talk talk talk - where's the action?

Mark WALKS around the table.

GAIUS

Where are you going? Mark?

LEPIDUS

I say, is the meeting over?

MARK

I'll tell you where I'm going. I'm going to the middle of the forum, I'm going to talk to the men, and I'm going to tell them that we're invading Egypt - now!

GAIUS

What!

MARK

No ifs, no buts - and that's a guarantee, from all three of us!

GAIUS

You can't do that.

MARK

Gaius, you have no idea what I can do.

GAIUS

No, I mean you can't go out there. Look at you. You've pissed yourself.

Beat.

MARK

Have I?

He has.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh, what...?

He begins SLAPPING AT HIS LEGS.

GAIUS

(to himself)

I don't believe this...

MARK

Oh no... Has anyone got a towel?

LEPIDUS

Here, use the treaty.

GAIUS

Don't use the treaty.

MARK

Mate, I've got to use something, it's all over the floor.

Octavia ENTERS. Around about now, we can hear the ANGRY VOICES of a MOB OF SOLDIERS outside.

OCTAVIA
Hey, Gaius? Can I borrow you for a second?

GAIUS
Not now, Octavia.

OCTAVIA
Um, it's quite urgent though. See, there's a mob of soldiers outside, and they're getting impatient.

SOLDIERS
(off)
Where's our money? Where's our money? Where's our money? (etc)

GAIUS
Oh Gods...

OCTAVIA
Do you want me to pass a message?

MARK
Yeah, tell them I'm not here.

GAIUS
Mark, we've got to deal with this.

MARK
Tell them to go away then!

GAIUS
We can't.

MARK
But we're in charge! Don't they know that? They'll do what we tell them, because we are in charge!

OCTAVIA
Have you pissed on our floor?!

MARK
Clearly, yes! Now find some towels!

LEPIDUS
Um. If the meeting's over, I thought I might head off for an early lunch?

GAIUS

Urghhh...

Gaius FALLS BACK INTO HIS CHAIR, defeated.

SOLDIERS

(off, still chanting)

Where's our money? Where's our
money? Where's our money? (etc)

9

INT. CLEOPATRA'S QUARTERS - EVENING

9

We end Charmian's narrative, and find ourselves back in Cleopatra's quarters where the queen is LAUGHING smugly.

CLEOPATRA

Incredible! The situation sounds worse than I'd ever dared to hope. And is all of this really true?

CHARMIAN

I filled in a few gaps, but I drew upon the reports of our spies in Rome. The Triumvirs intend to seek aid from us - it can only be a matter of time.

CLEOPATRA

Thank you, Charmian. You have a knack for bringing these matters to life. Makes it so much easier to know what to do.

CHARMIAN

My Queen is too kind. I've always enjoyed telling stories.

CLEOPATRA

You've got a real gift, I shall make full use of it.

GUARDS are APPROACHING; feet on WOODEN FLOOR. They DRAG a prisoner with them.

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

And if I'm not mistaken, it sounds like we finally have company.

PTOLEMY

(off)

Unhand me! Let go! Let go of me!

CLEOPATRA

Trust him to be late. You'll do the honours, won't you?

CHARMIAN

My lady.

The GUARDS enter with their prisoner, PTOLEMY, an unimposing lad who happens to be King. They THROW HIM DOWN.

PTOLEMY

Aargh!... What is going on around here?... I demand-!

CHARMIAN

Silence. You kneel in the presence of the almighty, beloved by her father and her people. Abase yourself before the infinite majesty of the rightful Pharoah of Egypt, the living goddess, and our Queen... Cleopatra!

PTOLEMY

I know that! I'm her husband!

CLEOPATRA sits up, in command of the situation.

CLEOPATRA

Ptolemy, dear. I'm so sorry to get you out of bed like this. It must have been quite the surprise, to you and whomever or whatever you were sharing it with.

PTOLEMY

Get me out of bed?! You've dragged me all the way to Greece! I was still in Egypt a week ago!

CLEOPATRA

Well I wasn't cutting my holiday short just because of you.

PTOLEMY

Holiday? You've never taken a day off in your life.

CLEOPATRA

You take more than enough for both of us. Charmian, how many was it?

CHARMIAN

Too many to count.

CLEOPATRA

Not a good look for a King is it?

CHARMIAN

Not a good look at all.

PTOLEMY

You can't treat me like this! I'm Egypt's King! I outrank you! You're committing treason, I hope you know that!

CLEOPATRA

I do. But here we are.

PTOLEMY

What do you want from me?

CLEOPATRA

From you? Nothing.

Cleopatra APPROACHES him slowly, confidently.

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

You're of no use to me, to Egypt, or to anyone. I'd half a mind to leave you alone, but you're always whining, and causing a scene.

CHARMIAN

Or plotting to remove the Queen.

CLEOPATRA

Yes, because you're right, I don't take a holiday without cause. I left Egypt to see what you'd do - and you rather took the bait.

PTOLEMY

(stubborn)

I don't know what you mean.

CLEOPATRA

But your conspirators do - they're all dead. So instead of keeping you hanging around, I thought it best if I... didn't.

PTOLEMY

Damn it, I'm your brother.

CLEOPATRA

Yes... Marrying one's brother. Never my favourite part of the job.

(MORE)

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

Still, with you gone, I won't have
to do it ever again, will I?

PTOLEMY

You're going to have me executed?

CLEOPATRA

No. I believe if you want something
done, you should do it yourself.

PTOLEMY

What the-

Cleopatra SLITS PTOLEMY'S THROAT. Horrible DEATH GURGLES. His
body FALLS to the ground.

Beat.

CLEOPATRA

Good. That was simple enough.

SHEATHES KNIFE.

CLEOPATRA (CONT'D)

Have his body dumped in the sea.

CHARMIAN

Of course my lady.

(TO GUARDS)

Remove it!

She CLAPS HER HANDS. The guards DRAG the BODY away.

CLEOPATRA

And now, a change of scenery.

CHARMIAN

Shall I instruct the Captain to
ready our ship for Egypt?

CLEOPATRA

No we're not returning home just
yet. We're going to Italy.

CHARMIAN

Italy, really?

CLEOPATRA

We mustn't keep our Roman friends
waiting, must we? Matters like
these require the personal touch.

CHARMIAN

Is it wise for you to return there
so soon? After Caesar's death -

CLEOPATRA

(brisk, not unkindly)

Your concern is noted, Charmian,
but unnecessary. I feel quite able
to face Rome once again. After all,
it's time we all knew who's really
in charge...

END TITLES & CREDITS