

Excerpt from...

"I, COLITUS"
by Bruce Kane

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22448 Bessemer St.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

PH: 818-999-5639
E-mail: bk@kaneprod.com

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The above billing must appear as follows: "I, Colitus" By Bruce Kane.

WARNING: No one shall make any changes to this play for the purpose of production. Publication of these plays does not imply its availability for production.

"I, COLITUS"
By Bruce Kane

Cast of Characters:

COLITUS: Mid thirties... Slave and confidante of Julius Caesar.

JULIUS CAESAR: Early fifties... Dictator of Rome

CLEOPATRA: Early twenties... Ambitious, beautiful and incredibly well built.

CALPURNIA: Caesar's wife... Mid forties... Formidable.

MARC ANTHONY: Roman general... As dim as he is handsome.

BRUTUS: The noblest Roman of them all... or so he says.

CASSIUS: Tall, thin and conspiratorial.

(The following roles can be double or triple cast)

PRESENTER:

ADMIRAL: Egyptian naval officer

CRAZY OLD MAN

WINE TASTER: Very nervous slave.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

SOLDIER

CENTURION

HERALD

COMEDIAN #1

COMEDIAN #2

CHARMIAN

SERVANT 1

SERVANT 2

SERVANT 3

DELIVERY MEN (Non-speaking)

ROMAN CHORUS: Numbering at least four members. (*May also play other roles*)

Place: The Roman Empire

Setting: Roman columns, three curtains and a few artifacts of the era give us a sense of place and time. This set will provide the back drop for all of our locations.

LIGHTS UP:

PRESENTER: Good evening and welcome to (NAME OF YOUR THEATRE)
Tonight you will see a play that was written over two thousand years ago by an obscure Roman functionary by the name of Colitus Phlebitus. What you are about to witness is Colitus's up close and personal account of Julius Caesar's final days, from the Roman dictator's first encounter with the sexy and ambitious Cleopatra to the events leading up to his fateful meeting with the Roman senate on the Ides of March. For some reason, in telling his story, Colitus chose the format of a play rather than a memoir. Why? We do not know. We can only surmise, that like others to follow, he had the mistaken belief there was money to be made in the theatre. Colitus also believed there is nothing true students of history value more than depictions of political intrigue, raw ambition, betrayal, murder and, of course, sex. And, like all successful historians, he built his account on personal observations, first hand accounts, second hand accounts, third hand accounts, self serving accounts, rumors, half truths, scurrilous lies and the rest - and I quote the author himself - "I just made up." And now, after two thousand years... "I, Colitus."

(Presenter exits)

(The ROMAN CHORUS ENTERS. The members takes their places, unroll papyrus scrolls and begin to read in sonorous tones.)

ROMAN CHORUS:

This is the tale of Cleo and Caesar
The Egyptian queen and the Roman geezer.
We polished the story and knocked off the rust
To bring you a tale full of greed and lust
Our play begins in Egypt you see
Cause that's where Caesar was
In forty seven B.C.

(JULIUS CAESAR, COLITUS AND CENTURION enter)

ROMAN CHORUS: Hail, Caesar.

CAESAR: By the gods, this place has gotta be hotter than the crapper in Hades.

COLITUS: Oh, great Caesar, it was, after all, your decision to conquer Egypt in August.

CAESAR: I have always preferred to conquer a country in August , Colitus.

COLITUS: And why is that, Caesar?

CAESAR: Everyone's at the beach.

(Two EGYPTIAN DELIVERY MEN enter carrying a rolled up carpet)

CAESAR: What the hell is this?

COLITUS: From all appearances, it seems to be a carpet, Caesar.

CAESAR: A carpet? A carpet?? What do I need with a carpet? Does it look like I'm redecorating?

(One of the Delivery Men whispers to Centurion)

CENTURION: The carpet is a gift to the mighty Caesar from her majesty the serene Cleopatra.

(From inside the carpet we hear)

WOMAN'S VOICE: That's serene and beautiful you Roman moron... Serene and beautiful.

CENTURION: From the serene and beautiful Cleopatra.

CAESAR: Okay then. Let's take a look... UNROLL THE CARPET.

(The Delivery Men snap open the carpet sending CLEOPATRA rolling across the stage. Her roll comes to an abrupt halt when she hits a column.)

ROMAN CHORUS: From out of the carpet rolled one hot little toddy...
To which Caesar exclaimed...

CAESAR: Holy Toledo. Check out that body!

CLEOPATRA: Hey... Is someone gonna help me up?

COLITUS: Allow me.

(Colitus helps Cleopatra to her feet)

CLEOPATRA: That's better. *(straightens her clothes, what there is of them, and her crown. She looks over the men staring at her and then in a no nonsense voice asks...)* Okay, which one of you guys is Julius Caesar?

CAESAR: I am the mighty Caesar.

CLEOPATRA: *(slinking up to Caesar)* Why don't you let me be the judge of that?

CAESAR: And just who might you be?

(Cleopatra runs her finger down his chest to his waist)

CLEOPATRA: I just might be Cleopatra, Queen Of Egypt. But you can call me... Cleo.

CAESAR: Why didn't anyone tell me the Queen of Egypt had more curves than the Appian Way?

CLEOPATRA: Would it have made a difference, oh mighty Caesar?

CAESAR: You bet. I wouldn't have waited so long to conquer Egypt .

CLEOPATRA: Now that you're here, oh "mighty" Caesar, perhaps you'll permit me to show the sights.

CENTURION: *(to Colitus)* Looks like she's doing a pretty good job of that right now

CAESAR:. I'd be honored, majesty. I've always wanted to see your legendary Nile... Your ancient Sphinx.

(Cleopatra takes Caesar's arm)

CLEOPATRA: My magnificent pyramids?

(She begins to lead Caesar off)

CAESAR: Is it true what they say, Majesty?

CLEOPATRA: Probably.

CAESAR: That yours in the face that launched a thousand ships;

CLEOPATRA: I think you're confusing me with Helen Of Troy.

CAESAR: No, I once knew a girl named Helen in Troy. Her face couldn't launch a rowboat.

(And on that, they exit. Colitus directs the Ferrymen to roll up the carpet. Then the rest exit)

SOUND: Trumpets, crowds cheering.

(BRUTUS and CASSIUS enter)

BRUTUS: Look, Cassius... Caesar has returned to Rome. The mob greets him as though he were a god.

CASSIUS: Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

BRUTUS: Cassius;

CASSIUS: Yes, Brutus.

BRUTUS: Why can't you talk like everybody else?

CASSIUS: All I'm saying is that since Caesar has become dictator, he has destroyed our beloved republic. I simply want things to return to the way they once were.

BRUTUS: Yes... When we ran things.

CASSIUS: Exactly... And there is a way.

BRUTUS: What are you suggesting, Cassius?

CASSIUS: That you kill Caesar.

BRUTUS: Me? Why don't you kill him?

CASSIUS: I would...I would... But the mob thinks of me as just another lazy aristocrat. Fearful that he'll be exposed for the fraud that he is. Jealous of Caesar's power.

BRUTUS: Chalk one up for the mob.

CASSIUS: But, you... You're Brutus... You're the noblest Roman of them all.

BRUTUS: That's true.

CASSIUS: You kill Caesar and it's a blow for truth, justice and the Roman way.

BRUTUS: The mob loves Caesar. I kill him and they'll tear me limb from limb.

CASSIUS: A small price to pay for liberty, wouldn't you say?

BRUTUS: Quiet... Caesar approaches.

(Caesar enters to the applause and huzzahs of the Roman Chorus, which could also encourage the audience to join in. Caesar is accompanied by Colitus.)

ROMAN CHORUS: Huzzah... Huzzah.

COLITUS: Master, might I have a word with you?

ROMAN CHORUS: Huzzah... Huzzah.

CAESAR: *(Still acknowledging the huzzahs.)* Not while I'm being huzzahed.

COLITUS: It's important excellency.

CAESAR: Make it quick, Colitus. I'm a busy man. I've got cities to sack, countries to crush and people to enslave.

COLITUS: Excellency, you once said that as soon as you had conquered the known world, you would grant me my freedom.

CAESAR: I said that?

COLITUS: I wrote it down. *(Refers to his notes)* As soon I conquer the world I will give Colitus his freedom.

CAESAR: What is this obsession you have with freedom, Colitus?

COLITUS: I've never been free, Caesar. It sounds like it could be fun.

CAESAR: Take it from me, Colitus. Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.

(Brutus and Cassius cross to Caesar.)

BRUTUS: Noble Caesar.

CAESAR: Noble Brutus.

CASSIUS: Noble Caesar.

CAESAR: Noble Cassius.

BRUTUS: Welcome back to Rome, Noble Caesar.

CAESAR: It is good to see you again, noble Brutus. And you noble Cassius

CASSIUS: Pray, tell us, how did the conquering go?

CAESAR: You know how it is. A country here, a kingdom there and pretty soon you rule the world.

BRUTUS: And how was Egypt, Caesar?

CAESAR: Someday you must make the trip, noble Brutus. If, only to see the pyramids. Magnificent those pyramids.

CASSIUS: Yes, we heard you met Cleopatra.

CAESAR: Like, I said, magnificent those pyramids. Now tell me, noble Brutus, what's this I hear about the Roman Senate making me a god?

CASSIUS: Some do talk of making you a God, Caesar.

CAESAR: Really?

BRUTUS: Some talk of making you immortal.

CAESAR: Immortal? Is that true, Cassius?

CASSIUS: Yes, Caesar, Immortal. And as soon as possible.

CAESAR: Then it's good to be home. We must dine together soon.

BRUTUS: At your pleasure, Caesar.

CAESAR: Until then, noble Brutus.

BRUTUS: Until then, noble Caesar.

CAESAR: Until then, noble Cassius.

CASSIUS: Until then, noble Caesar.

(Cassius and Brutus exit)

CAESAR: What can I say, Colitus? They love me... The Roman Senate loves me.

COLITUS: If you say so, Caesar.

CAESAR: Do I detect a note of skepticism Colitus?

COLITUS: And why would Caesar think that?

CAESAR: Well, for one thing there's yes, yes in your voice, but there's no no's on your face. *(They exchange confused looks)*

COLITUS: I have no idea what Caesar is talking about.

CAESAR: Tell me the truth, Colitus.

COLITUS: Is that an order Caesar?

CAESAR: Of course, it's an order.

COLITUS: In that case, the Senate hates Caesar.

CAESAR: The Senate hates Caesar? Why would you say such a thing?
(scoffing) The Senate hates Caesar...

COLITUS: Well sire, you did destroy the Republic.

CAESAR: Only to save it.

COLITUS: And, you took away the right of citizens to vote.

CAESAR: Which only gave them more time to fornicate. Remember, Colitus, a fornicating citizen is a happy citizen.

COLITUS: But now yours is the only voice that counts in all of Rome.

CAESAR: That's because I'm the only one that's a god.

COLITUS: Officially, only a candidate for god.

CAESAR: But I'm a shoo-in to win. Any Senator who votes against me will lose his fortune, his home and all he holds dear.

COLITUS: And why is that, Caesar?

CAESAR: Because I will take it all away from him. That's what gods do. They giveth and then they taketh away.

COLITUS: If Caesar says so, then it must be so.

CAESAR: You know Colitus, sometimes you can be a real pain in the ass.

COLITUS: You could always set me free, Caesar.

CAESAR: What's next on my schedule?

COLITUS: (*checks his notes*) Home and Mrs. Caesar.

CAESAR: (*fearful*) Did you say, Mrs. Caesar?

COLITUS: Yes, excellency... Mrs. Caesar.

CAESAR: You sure about that?

COLITUS: It's right here on your schedule.

CAESAR: Perhaps I could ravage another country. Some little out of the way place we missed.

COLITUS: No, excellency. You pretty much ravaged them all.

CAESAR: How about a revolt I could quell?

COLITUS: All is peaceful.

CAESAR: Damn.

COLITUS: I'm afraid, Mrs. Caesar is next.

CAESAR: You're afraid???

COLITUS: Excellency... No offense intended, but Mrs. Caesar is, after all, only a woman.

CAESAR: You've never been married, have you Colitus?

COLITUS: No, sire.

CAESAR: I envy you.

COLITUS: But I am a slave, sire. How could you envy me?

CAESAR: You're an unmarried slave. To you, Calpurnia is only a woman. But to me she is the most daunting force of nature the gods ever placed on the face of the earth.

COLITUS: More daunting than the Cyclops, Caesar?

CAESAR: Much more daunting... And with better eyesight.

COLITUS: More formidable than the Alps, Caesar?

CAESAR: And harder to cross.

COLITUS: But how can this be Caesar? How can one small woman be so daunting... so formidable?

CAESAR: Easy Colitus... She's a wife.

(A CRAZED OLD MAN enters and crosses to Caesar)

CRAZED OLD MAN: Beware the Ides of March.... Beware the Ides of March.
(Wanders off) Beware the Ides of March.... Beware the Ides of March. *(He finally exits)*

CAESAR: Colitus... Make a note.

COLITUS: Yes, Caesar.

CAESAR: Find out what the hell the Ides of March are.

(Caesar and Colitus exit. CALPURNIA, Caesar's wife, enters complaining to her off-stage slaves)

CALPURNIA: No, no, no... The orgy mats do not go next to the buffet table. We don't want people eating on the mats or... vice versa. Especially Vice Versa. The man is an animal.

ROMAN CHORUS: Meet Caesar's wife.
Her name is Calpurnia.
Mess with her
And she's sure to burn ya.

CALPURNIA: *(muttering)* Doesn't anybody here speak Latin? Great Zeus, almighty, it's hard to capture good slaves these days.

ROMAN CHORUS: She'll smile, she'll bow, she'll scratch your itch.
But get her in way and she's one scary...

(Caesar enters accompanied by Colitus)

CAESAR: *(cutting off the Chorus)* Calpurnia, my beloved wife.

CALPURNIA: You're late. Where the hell have you been?

CAESAR: Is that any way to greet your husband upon his return from six years of war. Six years of battle. Six years of killing and pillaging and plundering?

CALPURNIA: Y'know, Julius, you're not getting any younger. Maybe it's time you looked around for another line of work.

CAESAR: But I rule the world. Where am I going to find something that pays this well. Not to mention the perks.

CALPURNIA: I've heard about the perks.

ROMAN CHORUS: Caesar fought his way through hell.
And then he rang ole Cleo's bell.

CALPURNIA: It's true, isn't it?

CAESAR: Is what true?

CALPURNIA: Don't play your coy little "I'm almost a god" routine with me.

CAESAR: Cleopatra and I just had dinner together.

CALPURNIA: And you expect me to believe that?

CAESAR: It's true... Cleopatra is the Queen of Egypt. After destroying her army, jailing her generals and generally laying waste to her country, buying her dinner was the least I could do. It's called foreign policy.

CALPURNIA: Are you trying to tell me you didn't dock your man of war in the Egyptian delta?

ROMAN CHORUS: Big Julie led his troops to war
While Cleopatra begged for more.

CAESAR: (*to Colitus*) Who the hell are they?

COLITUS: It's the Roman Chorus, sire. A theatrical device we appropriated from the Greeks. Along with their gods, their art, their fashion, their women and pretty much everything else that wasn't nailed down.

CAESAR: (*to Calpurnia*) Colitus was at my side, every step of the way. (*to Colitus*) Tell my dear wife... Is there anything between the Queen and myself?

COLITUS: That depends of your definition of "is."

CALPURNIA: I'll find out the truth. I always do. Didn't I find out about you and Celia, the Sicilian Slut? And how about your little fling with Phyllis the philandering Philistine? You may have forgotten about Mary the merry Macedonian, but I haven't. And what about...?

CAESAR: I'm telling you nothing happened.

CALPURNIA: If I find out that even so much as a look passed between you and what'shername, I'll make your life a living hell. When I'm through with you, being strung up and slowly eviscerated by the Germanic hordes will look like a day at the beach. *(She storms off angrily)*

CAESAR: *(Calling after her, Caesar speaks in a rhythm borrowed from the old blues song "Caledonia")*

Calpurnia...

Calpurnia...

What makes your big head so hard?

ROMAN CHORUS: *(gives Caesar a final beat)* Huhhhhh!!!

CAESAR: This could be a problem, Colitus... A big problem.

COLITUS: In what way, excellency?

CAESAR: Conquering the world has left me in debt up to my eyeballs. Without the political backing and vast financial support of Calpurnia's family...

COLITUS: I understand excellency... You'll be back mucking manure in Macedonia.

(Caesar and Colitus exit)

ROMAN CHORUS: Meanwhile back in Egypt land

Cleopatra walked the desert sand.

While working out a clever plan,

She got herself an even tan.

(Cleopatra enters with her ADMIRAL)

CLEOPATRA: Admiral, I want to you to prepare the fleet.

ADMIRAL: For sailing, your highness?

CLEOPATRA: Yes, of course, for sailing. What else does a fleet do?

ADMIRAL: I just wanted to be sure, majesty. The last time your highness had me prepare the fleet, it never left port. As a matter of fact, it never left your...

CLEOPATRA: Yes, yes...

ADMIRAL: The men still sing your praises, highness.

CLEOPATRA: *(pleased)* They do?

ADMIRAL: Enlistments doubled.

CLEOPATRA: Doubled? Really? That must have been some recruiting poster.

ADMIRAL: Well, your majesty was magnificent.

CLEOPATRA: Yes, she was, wasn't I? Tell the navy, we'll do it again... real soon. In the meantime, we sail within the week. I'm bored with Egypt. Too much sand. It's gets in everything. I've decided to rule the world.

ADMIRAL: But, the world has never been ruled by a woman, majesty

CLEOPATRA: Then it's about time the world got a woman's touch. Some curtains here... A few throw pillows there and the world will look so much more attractive. Don't you agree Admiral?

ADMIRAL: Whatever her majesty desires.

CLEOPATRA: In that case... *(cozies up to the Admiral)*... what are you doing later tonight?

ADMIRAL: Preparing the fleet, highness.

CLEOPATRA: Oh... Yes, of course. The fleet.

ADMIRAL: And what will be your highness's destination?

CLEOPATRA: Rome! Rome and Caesar!!

ADMIRAL: But, majesty... Caesar has a mighty army... Caesar controls all the oceans and seas. Caesar has the entire treasury of the Roman Empire at his disposal. What does Egypt have that can match the mighty Caesar's arsenal?

CLEOPATRA: *(hefts her bosom with both hands)* These.

ADMIRAL: *(pumps his fist in the air)* Today Rome!!! Tomorrow the world!!!

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