
The Tip of my Toga

by

David Muncaster

The Tip Of My Toga

Characters:

Maximus:	Private Eye. Sam Spade type character
Brutus:	Senator who hires Maximus. Decidedly odd.
Antonia:	Caesar's ally. Smart.
Claudius:	Innkeeper. Don't call him Claude!
Calpurnia:	Mrs Caesar. Beautiful, smart and with a hidden agenda.

First performed at Chelford Festival, June 2015, with the following cast:

Maximus:	Sam Oliver
Brutus:	Gwion Hills
Antonia:	Alannah Roberts
Claudius:	Edward Selby
Calpurnia:	Phoebe Howman

The Tip Of My Toga

There are few stage directions because it is up to the director how much movement they want but I'd suggest that the actors appear on the stage just as they are about to deliver their line. Maximus could perhaps be perched on a desk as he begins and this could double for a table in the bar later in the play.

MAXIMUS: *(To audience)* My name is Maximus Flavius Maximus. My job: Private Detective. My status: Single. But that don't mean I ain't lookin'; you could say that I'm a Roman Eye. In more ways than one. A good private detective needs three things. An inquisitive mind, a sense of humour and a very thin piece of paper. You have the paper in case you need to trace someone. OK. Not many private detectives in the audience then. The story I'm going to tell you happened on a day just like any other day. In other words: quiet. It's March in the year 44 BC and I've not had a decent case since 51. If business doesn't pick up soon I might end up working until the early 30s or even late 20s. Boy do I wish that the years went forwards instead of backwards. Who invented this crazy system? And what the heck is BC? Anyway, I was just about to lock up when this Brutus guy burst into the office.

BRUTUS: Are you Maximum Flavius Maximus, Private Eye?

MAXIMUS: Sure am. What can I do for you?

BRUTUS: I bring terrible news. Julius Caesar has been murdered.

MAXIMUS: Julius Caesar?

BRUTUS: Yes.

MAXIMUS: Murdered?

BRUTUS: Yes.

MAXIMUS: Big Jules? But how?

BRUTUS: He was stabbed.

MAXIMUS: Stabbed?

BRUTUS: Yes. He was stabbed in the Senate.

MAXIMUS: Nasty.

BRUTUS: Right in the Rotunda.

MAXIMUS: Ouch.

BRUTUS: It's crazy out there. You have to find the killer. The crowd want blood.

MAXIMUS: Yeah, yeah. I hear you, but just a minute. We need to talk terms. I ain't a charity, it's strictly cash on delivery with me. No pay, no way. Capiche?

BRUTUS: Don't you worry about that. Nail the right guy and you'll get the spondulix.

MAXIMUS: Good enough. But I like to know who's bankrolling me.

BRUTUS: I'm Marcus Junius Brutus The Younger.

MAXIMUS: Hey, any relation to Marcus Junius Brutus Major?

BRUTUS: Yeah, that was my pa.

MAXIMUS: I thought his son was Marcus Junius Brutus Minor.

BRUTUS: Yeah, that's me too. I ain't a minor no more, but I am still a junior.

MAXIMUS: Well, at least you get cheaper membership.

BRUTUS: I was Quintus Servilius Caepio Brutus for a while but people found that a bit of a mouthful.

MAXIMUS: Yeah, I can see that. Can I just call you Brutus?

BRUTUS: If it makes you happy.

MAXIMUS: Ecstatic. So what's your interest in this?

BRUTUS: I was Caesar's best friend. One of his most trusted Senators.

MAXIMUS: And do you have any clue about who might be responsible for this?

BRUTUS: None at all. He was such a lovely guy. Who would want to hurt him?

MAXIMUS: Well, that's what I intend to find out.

BRUTUS: The whole of Rome is depending on you.

MAXIMUS: I see. In that case, lead the way Brutus.

MAXIMUS: (*To audience*) I locked up my office and followed Brutus out into the street. but he disappeared as soon as we got outside. Where can he have gone There's something about that guy that isn't quite right, why would a guy change his name more often than some people change their socks? He was right about the crowd, though. I've never seen such a throng: and boy were they ugly.

ANTONIA: What do you mean ugly?

MAXIMUS: (*To audience*) There's an exception to every rule. (*To Antonia*) I didn't mean you, doll. What's going down?

ANTONIA: Haven't you heard? Big Jules has cashed in his chips.

MAXIMUS: And I'd gamble on you knowing something about it. What's your name, doll?

ANTONIA: I'm Antonia. Antonia Marcus.

MAXIMUS: Something's the wrong way round here.

ANTONIA: I'm not with you.

MAXIMUS: Well, ain't that a shame.

ANTONIA: I mean I don't get you.

MAXIMUS: You make me sound like a newspaper.

ANTONIA: Quit playing games. What are you getting at?

MAXIMUS: You ever heard of a guy called Mark Antony?

ANTONIA: No but I'm hoping they have.

MAXIMUS: Who?

ANTONIA: *(Points to audience)* Them.

MAXIMUS: We should be OK. They look smart enough. Just. So, **Antonia Marcus**. How are you mixed up in all this?

ANTONIA: I was Caesar's best friend.

MAXIMUS: How many best friends can a guy have?

ANTONIA: Me and Big Jules were like that. I was his most trusted general. But now he's curled up his toes it's down to me to keep order. I just made a big speech: 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen. Lend me your ears'.

MAXIMUS: Did it do any good?

ANTONIA: Not really, they told me to get my own ears.

MAXIMUS: Let me ask you a question. Where were you when the big guy copped it?

ANTONIA: Are you treating me as a suspect?

MAXIMUS: Got a guilty conscience? I'm just wondering if you saw him die.

ANTONIA: No. I didn't get to him in time.

MAXIMUS: What does that mean?

ANTONIA: I tried to stop him.

MAXIMUS: You tried to stop who? The murderer?

ANTONIA: No, Jules. I went to tell him not to go to the Senate but I was too late.

MAXIMUS: Why wouldn't he want to go to the Senate.

ANTONIA: I can think of a big pointy reason.

MAXIMUS: You mean that you knew he was in danger?

ANTONIA: Everyone knew.

MAXIMUS: I didn't know.

ANTONIA: Some detective you are.

MAXIMUS: Hey, you watch your mouth. If it wasn't for the fact that you're a dame I'd...

ANTONIA: Yeah?

MAXIMUS: Never mind. Tell me what happened when Julie reached the Senate.

ANTONIA: Well, it's obvious. They jumped him.

MAXIMUS: Who jumped him?

ANTONIA: The other Senators, I guess.

MAXIMUS: I need names, doll.

ANTONIA: Names, I can't give you. But if you want to know who's behind it, you need to ask who pays the ferryman.

MAXIMUS: *(To audience)* With that, the broad was gone. "Who pays the ferryman." What was she getting at? There was only one thing for it. I was going to have to get down to the Senate to see for myself. I tried to hail a chariot but no one was stopping. No one wanted to go near the Senate: it was like Circus Maximus down there; if I was going to get there I was going to have to walk. Then my friend Brutus was back. *(To Brutus)* Hey. Where did you go? We need to get to the Senate.

BRUTUS: Why?

MAXIMUS: To see the scene of crime of course.

BRUTUS: Oh no. I'm not going back there.

MAXIMUS: Why not?

BRUTUS: I can think of a big pointy reason.

MAXIMUS: Have you just been listening to my conversation?

BRUTUS: Me? No! I just think it would be better if I stayed in this part of town.

MAXIMUS: Chicken eh? OK, well, how do I get there.

BRUTUS: It's easy. All roads lead to the Senate.

MAXIMUS: I thought all roads led to Rome.

BRUTUS: They do. But once you are in Rome all roads lead to the Senate.

MAXIMUS: Are you trying to be a wise guy?

BRUTUS: No, I'm just trying to help, that's all.

MAXIMUS: OK. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Sure you don't want to come with me?

BRUTUS: Positive. I'll wait for you in Claude's. How long you gonna be?

MAXIMUS: I'll meet you at XX past VII. Don't be late. (*To audience*) I found the Senate all right. I had to walk past a lot of building sites to get there but then, Rome wasn't built in a day. The crowds were huge but they weren't there for big Jules. They were next door at the Theatre Pompey to see Glacialis – Frozen with Latin subtitles. It turned my stomach to see them. A man murdered under their noses and they were all singing some dumb song. But I decided to let it go. Realising that there was nothing for me there I turned back. I was too early to meet up with Brutus but maybe someone in the Claudius Bar and Grill was doing a different kind of singing.

CLAUDIUS: What can I get you?

MAXIMUS: Whoever the Big Cheese is in this place.

CLAUDIUS: Why? Who are you?

MAXIMUS: Who am I? Maximus Flavius Maximus. Who are you?

CLAUDIUS: Who am I? Cluadius. I own this joint.

MAXIMUS: Then you're the fella I want. I'm here to see a guy called Brutus but I don't want him to see me if you follow my drift.

CLAUDIUS: I'm not sure I do.

MAXIMUS: It's like this, Claude...

CLAUDIUS: Don't call me Claude.

MAXIMUS: Why not?

CLAUDIUS: My name is Claudius. I. Claudius.

MAXIMUS: Keep saying it. Someone will get it in the end.

CLAUDIUS: Why don't you want Brutus to know that you are here.

MAXIMUS: He's hired me to find out who killed Big Jules. You know who Big Jules is, I take it?

CLAUDIUS: Sure I do. I never miss Hootananay. HOOTANANAY!

MAXIMUS: You idiot! Julius Caesar is who I'm talking about.

CLAUDIUS: Oh him! Yes, I heard he'd pegged it. But what's that got to do with a respectable establishment such as this? And this Brutus guy.

MAXIMUS: Why are you covering for him?

CLAUDIUS: Who says I am?

MAXIMUS: I get the sense that this is his local. If he is a regular customer how come you don't know him?

CLAUDIUS: I didn't say *I* didn't know him. I just don't know how well *you* know him, that's all.

MAXIMUS: What difference does it make?

CLAUDIUS: Lots of people know Brutus. Some are friends, some are enemies. Which are you?

MAXIMUS: I don't know yet. That's why I want to know what he's doing when he doesn't know I'm watching him.

CLAUDIUS: In that case you should hang around the snug. You should be able to hear him from there OK.

MAXIMUS: He's here?

CLAUDIUS: Sure. He's been here for a while.

MAXIMUS: Is he with anyone?

CLAUDIUS: You could say that.

MAXIMUS: I did say that.

CLAUDIUS: I know. I heard you.

MAXIMUS: Well? Who's he with?

CLAUDIUS: Calpurnia.

MAXIMUS: Calpurnia?

CLAUDIUS: That's Mrs Caesar to you and me.

MAXIMUS: (*To audience*) Curious. He never mentioned he was meeting anyone to me. And why would the recently widowed Mrs Caesar be meeting Brutus in a dive...

CLAUDIUS: (*Off*) Ahem!

MAXIMUS: ...I mean "respectable establishment" like this. I snuck up behind them where I could hear every word they were saying and also a get very good look at Mrs Calpurnia Caesar. Boy what a beauty. Could this be a crime of passion? I can imagine a man doing anything if the prize was a dame like Calpurnia. A thought planted itself in my brain and was soon sprouting shoots. What if Brutus and this Calpurnia dame were in cohorts? That puts a whole new perspective on things. I was starting to think that maybe I was close to solving this little mystery when this enchantress, this peach, this Roman Goddess spoke.

CALPURNIA: I said to him, "Jules, Jules baby, don't go. Do you know the date baby?" I said, "Jules, here's a clue baby. Yesterday was the fourteenth of March. Tomorrow's the sixteenth. Does that help baby? Can you think what the date is today?" But he just looks at me, so I tell him. "It's the fifteenth of March today. The fifteenth. You do know what that means dontcha?" But he just says "Don't worry

about it, honey", but I says "I do worry about it. The fifteenth of March, baby. The IDES of March! You know, as in Beware the Ides of March! Don't that worry you at all?" But he just says he has to go 'cos everyone was expecting him. "Oh, they are expecting you are they?" I says, "Well, is it too much to expect you to listen to me once in a while?"

MAXIMUS: *(To audience)* I'd heard enough. In fact, I was beginning to consider Jule's had had a lucky escape. I decided that concealment was gaining me nothing. I showed myself. *(To the others)* Ah, Brutus. And Mrs Caesar I believe. How nice to meet you. Can I get you a drink?

CALPURNIA: Why thank you. I'm having wine so I'll carry on wining.

MAXIMUS: I was worried you might say that. So wine for the lady. Et tu Brute?

BRUTUS: What did you say?

MAXIMUS: Oops. Pardon my Latin. And you Brutus?

BRUTUS: I'll have an orange juice.

MAXIMUS: *(To audience)* I'd ruffled his feathers all right but I wasn't sure why. Maybe Claude could put me in the picture. *(To Claudius)* They seem like a nice couple. Do they come in often?

CLAUDIUS: You're not expecting me to answer that.

MAXIMUS: I think you already did.

CLAUDIUS: OK. But once or twice, that's all. I don't allow no funny business in my establishment.

MAXIMUS: More's the pity. *(To audience)* I ordered the drinks and asked Claude to bring them over but when I got back to the table I found we had company.

CALPURNIA: I said to him, "Jules, Jules baby, don't go. Do you know the date baby?" But did he listen? Did he ever listen?

ANTONIA: Don't blame yourself Calpurnia.

CALPURNIA: I don't blame myself. I blame that stupid oaf of a husband.

ANTONIA: If only I had got to him earlier and told him not to go to the Senate.

CALPURNIA: What difference would that make? He wasn't murdered in the Senate. He was diverted.

MAXIMUS: Hold on a minute. Brutus, you told me that he was stabbed in the Senate.

BRUTUS: No I didn't, I said he was stabbed in the Rotunda.

MAXIMUS: Yeah, he was stabbed in the Rotunda, in the Senate.

CLAUDIUS: (*Arriving with drinks*) Maximus. Do you know what the Rotunda is?

MAXIMUS: Why sure it's... Well it's... Hey there's ladies present.

CLAUDIUS: The Rotunda is the big building next to the theatre. The other side of the theatre to the Senate.

MAXIMUS: Yeah. I knew that, Claude.

CLAUDIUS: Don't call me Claude.

MAXIMUS: Wait a minute. That's why the Senate was deserted. I was in the wrong place. You sent me to the wrong place. Why did you do that, Brutus?

BRUTUS: I don't know what you are talking about.

MAXIMUS: Oh, I think you do. You sent me off on a wild goose chase so I couldn't speak to any witnesses.

ANTONIA: The witnesses will still be around tomorrow.

MAXIMUS: Yes, but by then Brutus, here, will have had time to have got to them. To bribe them to keep their mouths shut, or slit their throats to make sure they keep their mouths shut.

BRUTUS: What are you insinuating?

MAXIMUS: I ain't insinuating nothin. I'm sayin it plain and simple. You killed Caesar.

BRUTUS: How dare you? I'm honest from the top of my head to the tip of my toga.

MAXIMUS: The tip of your toga ain't what's botherin' me. More like the point of your dagger.

BRUTUS: That's ridiculous. I'm paying you to find the killer.

MAXIMUS: The classic double bluff. I'm too smart to fall for that one.

ANTONIA: Ha!

BRUTUS: Well what about motive? You can't have a murder without a motive? What was my motive.

MAXIMUS: You're what?

BRUTUS: Motive.

MAXIMUS: Well...

BRUTUS: It's not like I stand to gain anything. I ain't his second in line.

MAXIMUS: But you could get elected.

BRUTUS: Me and about sixty others.

MAXIMUS: Ah.

BRUTUS: Got you there haven't I?

MAXIMUS: There must be something.

BRUTUS: Take your time.

MAXIMUS: I just need to think.

ANTONIA: Um.

MAXIMUS: Quiet. I'm thinking.

ANTONIA: Yes, but.

MAXIMUS: Can't you keep schtum.

ANTONIA: You might want to hear this.

MAXIMUS: Oh, for Pete's sake. Go on then, what's on your mind.

ANTONIA: Well, there is the whole dictator thing. I mean, if we are going to have any semblance to historical accuracy, which, admittedly, we haven't up to now, but if we are looking for motive then surely that fits the bill.

MAXIMUS: Quit talking in riddles will you? What dictator thing?

ANTONIA: Well, Caesar wanted to have absolute power didn't he? Do away with the Senate. And if you don't have a Senate you don't need Senators do you?

MAXIMUS: You're right. You don't need Senators like Senator Brutus. Ha! There's the motive. I knew I'd find it.

ANTONIA: Who found it?

MAXIMUS: What do you say, Brutus? Going to try to wriggle your way out of that one?

BRUTUS: All right. I admit it. I killed him. But I did it for the common good. Two thousand years from now people will remember my name as the father of democracy and freedom.

MAXIMUS: Two days from now people will remember you as the guy in the slammer. Come on Claude. Give me a hand with this guy.

CLAUDIUS: Don't call me Claude.

MAXIMUS: Another successful case for Maximis Flavius Maximun. Private detective, at your service.

BRUTUS: *(As he is led away)* Hey, they might even name a month after me.

CALPURNIA: I said to him, "Jules, Jules baby, don't go. It's the fifteenth of March today. Beware the Ides of March!" But he didn't listen. He never listened.

ANTONIA: Don't you ever shut up? Zip it before I throw you to the lions.

CALPURNIA: How barbaric!

ANTONIA: Well, when in Rome... What are you doing here anyway?

CALPURNIA: Drinking my wine, what do you think?

ANTONIA: It's hardly the place for a grieving widow.

CALPURNIA: Who says I'm grieving, honey?

ANTONIA: So what's all the "Jule's baby, don't go baby" business?

CALPURNIA: That's just for the men. They love a hysterical woman.

ANTONIA: You reckon?

CALPURNIA: I was being ironic. They couldn't wait to leave.

ANTONIA: But why did you want them to leave?

CALPURNIA: It's not so much that I wanted them to go, it's what they were doing when they went.

ANTONIA: Eh? What were they doing?

CALPURNIA: You saw it with your own eyes, honey.

ANTONIA: Arresting Caesar's murderer.

CALPURNIA: Yeah. That's right. That's what they were doing. Sure thing.

ANTONIA: You mean Brutus isn't the murderer?

CALPURNIA: Of course he is the murderer. He admitted it didn't he?

ANTONIA: I'm beginning to ask myself why.

CALPURNIA: For the glory of course. All that stuff about going down in history? The poor guy really believes it.

ANTONIA: But he'll be crucified. Literally.

CALPURNIA: Not if he has a sympathetic judge. Someone who'll be lenient.

ANTONIA: Who would do that? (*Dawning on her*) Not you!

CALPURNIA: Got it in one, honey.

ANTONIA: I can't believe that you'll be the judge at the trial of your own husband's murder.

CALPURNIA: It doesn't matter if you believe it, honey. He believed it, that's the point.

ANTONIA: You'll never get away with it.

CALPURNIA: Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.

ANTONIA: Got it all worked out haven't you?

CALPURNIA: You knew Jules. Don't tell me you ain't pleased he's outta the way.

ANTONIA: Hey, I come to bury Caesar, not praise him.

CALPURNIA: Just as I thought. Stick with me, sister, you could go far. In fact I might have a little job for you.

ANTONIA: What sort of job?

CALPURNIA: Have you ever heard of a floozy named Cleopatra?

End
