



## Masters of their fates

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**Cassius:**

Why, man, he [Caesar] doth bstride the narrow world  
Like a colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.  
Men at some time are masters of their fates;  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

[Julius Caesar Act 1, scene 2, 135–141](#)

Cassius, prime mover of the assassination plot against Julius Caesar, here continues a speech he hopes will draw Brutus into the conspiracy. Cassius's technique is to inflate the grandeur, and therefore the threat, of Caesar's power, in contrast to the wormlike submissiveness, and therefore the dishonor, of other leading Romans. The philosophical sentiments are appropriately classical, specifically Stoic: it is man who controls his own destiny, not heavenly powers. It's not the "fault" of the "stars" that Caesar is on top and Brutus and Cassius are underlings; the fault is "in ourselves," in their own lack of resolve. Brutus has been trusting to fate to restrain his friend Caesar's ambitions, when Brutus really ought to think, like Cassius, about seizing fate for himself.

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