



The most unkindest cut of all

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Marcus Antonius:

For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar lov'd 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. . . .

[Julius Caesar Act 3, scene 2, 181–186](#)

Marc Antony is in the middle of his great speech on the assassination of Julius Caesar [*see* [FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN, LEND ME YOUR EARS](#)]*—*which has very quickly turned into a character assassination of Brutus, a prominent republican, Caesar's friend and one of Caesar's murderers.

When Antony calls Brutus's stabbing of Caesar "the most unkindest cut of all," he is playing on two senses of "unkind"*—*"inhumane" and "unnatural." According to Antony, when Brutus literally "cut" the loving Caesar, a bloody deed was compounded with ingratitude. It wasn't the wound that killed Caesar, says Antony, but Brutus's treachery.

Time has softened Antony's language: all that remain are a weaker sense of "unkind" and a less literal use of "cut." "Most unkindest," by the way, wasn't as ungrammatical in Shakespeare's day as it is in ours.

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