

Act ii: development of relationships between husbands and wives essay sample

[Life](#), [Relationships](#)



Relationships between characters play a great part in Julius Caesar, the Shakespearean tragedy about the scheming of Caesar's death, which then are shown to affect all aspects of Roman life. Some relationships show the concealed discord between characters, some show the conniving spirit of those who desire power, while others show how some hearts are devoted entirely to the greater good of the republic. The dialogue between Brutus and Portia, along with that of Calphurnia and Caesar, plays a significant role in the development of the plot. Portia is a symbol of Brutus's private life, a representative of correct intuition and morality, just as Calphurnia is for Caesar, but they differ in several ways, including each wife's fears and concerns, each husband's response to the pleas of each wife, the final outcome of the exchange, and both couples' dramatic function in development of the play.

The fears and concerns of Portia and Brutus's reactions are shown once after the conspirators have left Brutus's house, where Portia becomes apprehensive to the point where she cannot hide her anxiety. Portia enters after the end of Brutus's soliloquy, approaching Brutus calmly. He, however, is a bit startled at the fact that his wife is awake at this time of night. Brutus shows his affection for Portia when he says, " Portia! What mean you? Wherefore rise you now? / It is not for your health thus to commit your weak condition to the raw cold morning"(2. 1. 224-226). Telling Brutus how she senses something is bothering him, perhaps a secret he is keeping from her, and knowing that within, he is at war with himself, she explains that Brutus got out of bed for an unknown reason, and the other night had arisen during supertime, with strange gesticulations and expressions. Reminding him,

Portia says, " When I asked you what the matter was, /you stared upon me with ungentle looks. I urged you further; then you scratched your head and too impatiently stamped with your foot" (2. 1. 261-264).

These odd mannerisms of Brutus lead Portia to be troubled once again, and when she inquires further about his affairs, he simply dismisses her with the wave of his hand. Portia also sees that Brutus' secrets have affected his physical appearance to a point almost beyond recognition. Brutus is restless, sleepless, and wisely she approaches him cautiously. All Portia wants to know, as a good wife, is the cause of his grief. However, even after Portia's long account of her grief and worry, Brutus is uneasy with this topic and coldly dismisses her, saying, " I am not well in health, and that is all" (2. 1. 227). He avoids answering any questions about public business, but Portia is a more intelligent woman than that, and she finds fault in his pathetic defense, explaining that if he were sick, he would know how to obtain good health. Brutus feels intimidated once again, briefly stating, " Why so I do. Good Portia, go to bed" in hope of diverting Portia from finding the source of his grief (2. 1. 280). Yet again, Portia is persistent, challenging Brutus by stating that Brutus is not ill, but has " a sick offense" within his mind, which she ought to know of.

To gain his favor, she pleads with him by kneeling, demonstrating her willingness to be submissive. Archly and playfully, Portia tells of days long gone, and she cries, " And upon my knees /I charm you, by my once commended beauty, by all your vows of love, and that great vow /which did incorporate and make us one" (2. 1. 290-294). Reasonably and logically, she

tries to convey to Brutus of the meaning of marriage, where two beings become one and share a life together. Both being part of one body, she believes that she has the right to know of those mysterious cloaked men.

At this time, Brutus feels a bit guilty of his past actions and knows that as husband and wife, they are not only two beings in one body, but equals, and lifts Portia up. Brutus shows his compassionate side, where he respects his wife and does not want her to feel inferior. Portia tells Brutus that if he were gentle, she would not need to beseech him while kneeling. Portia then restates that as a married couple, she is not just something, “to keep with you at meals, comfort your bed /and talk to you sometimes?” (2. 1. 306-307). She does not feel like his wife and equal anymore, saying that she is not important when kept in the back of her husband’s mind only for his pleasure. Guilty student. Portia, the rendition of the Roman modern woman, cannot live in that kind of state, believing that she feels used. She is very disturbed by the way she is treated, declaring “Portia is Brutus’ harlot, not his wife” (2. 1. 310).

Slowly, Brutus understands his wife and feels shame when recalling what she has gone through. He tries to comfort her by saying, “You are my true and honorable wife, /as dear to me as are the ruddy drops /that visit my sad heart (2. 1. 11-13). Next, Portia says that if what he says is true, Brutus should live up to his word by telling her the secret. Portia understands that as a woman, she is somewhat inferior to her husband, but she is not just any woman, for she has a good husband and is the daughter Cato, a well-respected Roman. To prove her constancy even further, she, following the

Hellenistic form of ascetics, stoicism, makes a gash in her thigh. Portia claims, "Can I bear that with patience /and not my husband's secrets?" (2. 1. 324-325). This wound was a proof of pain and showed her love and loyal constancy. Upon hearing this, an epiphany comes upon Brutus and he says in awed gladness, "O you gods, /render me worthy of this noble wife!" (2. 1. 326-327). Brutus now promises to confide all secrets in her and treasures his wife greater than before.

At last, from this dialogue between Brutus and Portia, we learn that Brutus will confide in her later, but the present time is not suitable to discuss the secrets with her. From this, trust emerges from its dark corners and fills the gap between Brutus and Portia. Brutus is awed by her calm and rational love (2. 1. 311-313) and Portia's pliancy proves that she's more than just a woman, because Brutus forgets that his wife is different from all others in that she was fathered and husbanded so well. Portia is strong enough to bear physical pain and has great endurance and patience, signifying that she is no ordinary woman.

One of the dramatic functions of this dialogue was to show the extent of the scheming and plotting of Caesar's death, which ultimately is destructive to all Roman life. One can see that the plans of the conspirators affected so many relationships with great impact and the danger, along with potency of this scheme. Brutus's compassionate, domestic and sensitive side is exposed for the first time and the readers are introduced to Portia, the strong-willed female of this story. Her personality is established and through her relationship with Brutus, the internal struggle of this story builds.

Calphurnia's fears and concerns, along with her husband, Caesar's response are starting to show. That night, Calphurnia dreams of Caesar's death and cries out his name in anguish three times during her sleep. Her premonitions frighten Caesar, and he awakes in the middle of the night, wandering about in his dressing gown and frightened. In response, he calls the servant to "bid the priests do present sacrifice, /and bring me their opinion of success" (2. 2. 5-6), being the superstitious man he is. Calphurnia demands Caesar to stay home, but Caesar does not heed his wife's pleas. Cheater. Caesar tries to act brave, saying, "Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me /ne'er looked but on my back. When they shall see /the face of Caesar, they are vanished" (2. 2. 10-12). Calphurnia begs him, saying that she never believed in omens but this particular dream has frightened her. She speaks of what happened in the city earlier in her dream, where dead men walked, ghosts wandered the city, a lioness gave birth in the street and lightning shattered the skies. Calphurnia believes these omens appeared for a reason, and Caesar must not ignore them.

Caesar, however, trying to be brave, believes that fate will take its place and rebuffs her, saying that these predictions are for the world in general.

Calphurnia points out that omens are often only for those who are very important, and Caesar once again tries to act gallant, saying that cowards forever are awaiting their death and go through the agony of waiting for their death, while the valiant "die but once", and Caesar tries to be valiant. The servant brings back the news from the augurers, "They would not have you to stir forth today. /Plucking the entrails of an offering forth, /they could

not find a heart within the beast" (2. 2. 41-43). For a third instance, Caesar tries to be manly and believes that if he stays home, he'd be a beast without a heart, for " Danger knows full /well that Caesar is more dangerous than he. /We are two lions littered in one day, /and I the elder and more terrible. /And Caesar shall go forth" (2. 2. 47-51).

Finally, Calphurnia manages to persuade Caesar to stay home by saying, " Call it my fear that keeps you in the house and not your own" (2. 2. 54-55). Later, when Decius Brutus arrives to fetch Caesar to the senate house, Caesar tells Decius that he will not come that day, and Calphurnia wants Decius to say Caesar is sick, giving him a legitimate excuse. Caesar is somewhat perturbed, saying, " Shall Caesar send a lie?" (2. 2. 70). This is where Caesar shows that he must live up to his reputation and image. When Decius insists on knowing the reason for his absence, Caesar tells him of Calphurnia's dream where " She dreamt tonight she saw my statue, /which like a fountain with a hundred spouts, /did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans /came smiling and did bathe their hands in it" (2. 2 80-84). Decius disputes Calphurnia's interpretation, saying that actually the dream signifies that Romans will all gain reviving blood from the strength of Caesar.

Decius makes Caesar edgy when he says, " Besides, it were a mock /apt to be rendered for someone to say /'Break up the Senate till another time, /when Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams.'/ If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper /' Lo, Caesar is afraid'?" (2. 2. 101-106). Decius also sways Caesar by telling him the Senate is deciding to give him the crown that day, and if Caesar stayed at home, he would be ridiculed for being

influenced by a woman, or being frightened by some ridiculous dreams. Caesar, fearing that he might lose public regard, and since he is a bit of a narcissist, insults Calphurnia in an angry tone, saying, " How foolish do your fears seem now, Calphurnia! I am ashamed I did yield to them. /Give me my robe, for I will go" (2. 2. 110-112). Decius's plan had worked on Caesar as planned.

At last, the dialogue leads to Caesar succumbing to Decius's flattery, and poor Calphurnia's influence is limited. He is ashamed to have listened to her " foolish" fears in the first place and values his reputation a great deal and through this section, shows his true colors as a conceited, stubborn, overwhelmingly self-confident, naïve, headstrong and weak egotist. He's somewhat chauvinistic, and Calphurnia, though she means the best for her husband, is diminished and has no influence on her husband. Her words do not count in political matters, and Caesar nearly always ignores her.

The purpose of this dialogue, primarily between Calphurnia and Caesar was, for the dramatic effect, foreshadowing. From Calphurnia's dream, one can sense that Caesar's death is approaching. Suspense is present and Calphurnia was very close in preventing him from going to the senate. We also learn " the other side" of Caesar as an arrogant, stuck-up Roman. The readers also see how Caesar treats his wife, where he never takes her opinion into consideration and constantly rebukes her thoughts. He looks down upon her and chooses political expediency, seeing which route to a solution will promote his public regard and strengthen his reputation.

Borrowed essay. The fact that Calphurnia loves her husband and truly cares

about Caesar is revealed in this scene, as well as Calphurnia's personality. Calphurnia is cautious, since she had an ominous dream and took note of its warning, and is also superstitious for trusting so much in one dream.

The relationship of Calphurnia and Caesar, and Portia and Brutus are quite different. Brutus is much more understanding with his wife than Caesar is with Calphurnia, and Brutus confides in her, but Caesar doesn't trust his wife's opinion. Caesar, unlike Brutus, is unable to separate his public life from his private life, and, seduced by the populace's increasing idealization and his idolization of his image, he ignores ill omens and threats against his life. Brutus is able to separate completely his public life from his private life; by giving priority to matters of state, and he shows concern for his wife when she needs him. Brutus loves his wife dearly, while Caesar may care for his wife a little bit, but doesn't treasure her as Brutus does.

Caesar is also gullible and naïve, while Brutus is more intelligent and vigilant of his surroundings. In one respect, Portia and Calphurnia's marital problems are similar in that often their role in influencing their husband is diminished, and both husbands will not confide in them when it comes to political matters. Interestingly also, to get their husbands' attention, they both plead on their knees and both husbands lift Portia and Calphurnia. The author cheats. However, Brutus lifts Portia to be his equal and Calphurnia is lifted, but she is still inferior to Caesar. I believe that the relationship between Portia and Brutus is one that will not be broken by death, but that of Calphurnia and Caesar is weak because they are not two spirits encompassing one body as Portia and Brutus's .