

What bad omens have people noticed?

Reading Check

37. be retentive to confine.
36. Therein in that way (by using his dagger on himself).
35. will deliver will set free.
34. yoke and suffer-
ance slavery and meek
acceptance of it.
33. woe the while alas
for the times.
32. thews (thyōz) n. mus-
cles or sinews; strength.
31. fearful causing fear.
30. monstrous state
abnormal condition of
government.
29. infused . . . spirits
filled them with super-
natural powers.
28. preformed . . . qual-
ity established function to
unnatural behavior.
- prodigious (prō dij' as) adj.
impressively forceful
27. ordinance regular
behavior.
26. calculate make
predictions.
25. from quality and
kind acting contrary to
their nature.
24. put on . . . in wonder
show fear and are amazed.

[Thunder still]

Or else you use not. You look pale, and gaze,
And put on fear, and cast yourself in wonder,²⁴
To see the strange impatience of the heavens;
But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,²⁵
Why old men, fools, and children calculate,²⁶
Why all these things change from their ordinance,²⁷
Their natures and preformed faculties,
To monstrous quality,²⁸ why, you shall find
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits²⁹
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state.³⁰
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night,
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
As doth the lion in the Capitol;
A man no mightier than thyself, or me,
In personal action, yet prodigious grown
And fearful,³¹ as these strange eruptions are.

CASCA. 'Tis Caesar that you mean, is it not, Cassius?

CASSIUS. Let it be who it is: for Romans now
Have thews³² and limbs like to their ancestors;
But, woe the while!³³ Our fathers' minds are dead,
And we are governed with our mothers' spirits;
Our yoke and sufferance³⁴ show us womanish.

CASCA. Indeed, they say the senators tomorrow
Mean to establish Caesar as a king;
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land,
In every place save here in Italy.

CASSIUS. I know where I will wear this dagger then;
Cassius from bondage will deliver³⁵ Cassius.
Therein,³⁶ ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to³⁷ the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides,
That part of tyranny that I do bear
I can shake off at pleasure.

CASCA. So can I;
So every bondman in his own hand bears
The power to cancel his captivity.