

SHELL SHOCKED

Beware the Ides of March

By Art Stevens

Beware the ides of March. March 15 is a historic day. It was on that day in 44 BC that Julius Caesar was assassinated and died knowing that his good friend Brutus had betrayed him.

And today, some two thousand years after Caesar's murder, we subconsciously keep some distance between ourselves and friends and family on March 15, particularly anyone we know named Brutus. It's the prudent thing to do.

Julie didn't have a clue that he would be stabbed some twenty-three times on that fateful March 15. He thought he would be going to the Roman Forum to hang out with the boys. He passed a soothsayer on the way and he asked the soothsayer, "Tell me a sooth, sayer."

The soothsayer looked into his opium mix and said, "Julie, don't you have something to do at home? Like right now?"

Caesar addressed the soothsayer, “If that’s a sooth, you’re not much of a soothsayer. Why am I even talking to you? I can find another soothsayer who can tell me the sooth.”

Julie walked a few more paces and encountered another soothsayer. Once again, he said “Soothsayer, soothsayer, tell me the sooth. I’d like some truth before I run into Ruth in the booth who’s long in the tooth.”

Caesar chuckled at his sudden spark of creativity. Didn’t know I had that inside of me, he thought. The second soothsayer said, “Oh mighty Caesar, I implore you. Do not go to the Forum today to hang out with your buddies. You will find out that your buddies are duddies. Get thee to a nunnery instead.”

Caesar shook the soothsayer by the shoulders. “There are no nunneries yet, you moron of a soothsayer. Nunneries come much later. Don’t you know your history? “

Caesar turned to one of his aides. “Strip this soothsayer of his soothsaying license. He is no longer allowed to practice soothsaying. Why are today’s soothsayers not as capable as those

of my childhood? Has soothsaying been relegated to less capable professionals? How am I to evaluate the future without a top notch soothsayer?"

Moments later as the knife blades sank deeply into his body Caesar would raise that thought again. Oh, he thought just before his spirit was whisked away to Mount Olympus, if only I had listened to those soothsayers. They were right. I should have stayed home and played with my Carthaginian skull collection.

Fast forward to March 15, 2015. As any of you approach Sanibel's major super market on that day you will see an elderly man sitting near the main entrance. He will be dressed in a toga and sandals. He will be holding a tattered copy of Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar."

As you pass him you will hear him say, "Beware the tides of March." And, yes, he is saying "tides", not "ides." Do not take him lightly. He is the soothsayer of Sanibel. He has studied at the knees of many generations of licensed soothsayers. He has

traveled far from the bistros of Italy to impart his knowledge to Sanibel visitors and residents.

Take what he says seriously. The tides of March in Sanibel can be troublesome. There is always the danger of the curse of Sanibel beaches – red tide. Red tide will remind you of the odor of Roman locker rooms. There is that connection.

Stay away from the beach on March 15. Stay home and watch reruns of “Breaking Bad.” Stay home that day and I will be sure to collect all the valuable sea shells on the beach in your absence – with a clothes pin on my nose.

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