

Act 4, Scene 1

1) The Triumvirs in control

- Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus enter together, showing that power in Rome has shifted into the hands of the new ruling alliance (the Second Triumvirate).
- The scene immediately feels cold and political: they are not debating justice—they are deciding who must die.

2) The Proscription list

- Antony says many people will be executed and their names are already "marked."
- Octavius pressures Lepidus to agree that even Lepidus's own brother must be killed, and Lepidus consents.
- Lepidus sets a condition in return: Antony's nephew (Publius) should also be killed, and Antony agrees immediately.
- This shows how personal ties mean nothing here: family members are traded like bargaining chips to secure political unity.

3) Caesar's will: the Triumvirs plan to reduce what Caesar promised

- Antony sends Lepidus to Caesar's house to fetch the will.
- Antony then openly says they will decide how to "cut off" (reduce) some of the public gifts Caesar left in his will.
- This contrasts strongly with Act 3 Scene 2, where Antony used the will to win the crowd; now he treats it as something to be edited for political convenience.

4) Lepidus as a pawn: Antony reveals his real opinion

- After Lepidus exits, Antony calls him "slight" and "unmeritable," fit only for errands, and questions whether he deserves to share rule of the "threefold world."
- Octavius points out the hypocrisy: Antony still let Lepidus help decide who gets executed.
- Antony explains his strategy: Lepidus will be used to do work and carry blame, like a donkey carrying gold, and then discarded when no longer useful.
- Octavius defends Lepidus as a "tried and valiant soldier," but Antony dismisses that, saying even a horse can be trained—Lepidus is basically a tool to be used.

5) War preparations: the conflict moves toward Philippi

- Antony shifts from internal purges to the bigger threat: Brutus and Cassius are raising armies.

- The Triumvirs decide they must act quickly—tighten alliances, expand resources, and meet in council to handle hidden dangers and open threats.
- Octavius adds that they are surrounded by enemies, and even people who smile may be planning harm—showing that politics has turned into paranoia and survival.

Important Questions-

1. Explain what the proscription list reveals about the new rulers of Rome. How is this different from Brutus's claim that Caesar was killed for the good of Rome?
2. Why does Octavius insist Lepidus's brother must die, and why does Lepidus agree? What does this show about politics and personal relationships in the play?
3. Why is Antony's decision to reduce Caesar's legacies significant? What does it suggest about Antony's character and the use of Caesar's will?
4. How does Antony describe Lepidus after he leaves, and why? Explain the comparisons Antony makes (donkey/horse/tool) and what they reveal about Antony's leadership style.
5. How does Act 4 Scene 1 prepare us for the battle at Philippi? Mention what Antony and Octavius say about Brutus and Cassius and the need to strengthen alliances.