

# BRUTUS

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**C**  **LÈRES**

# **Chapter 1: THE IDES OF MARCH**

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His fingers were wrapped tightly around the handle of the large-bladed knife. They could not relax their embrace. The weapon seemed welded to his knuckles. All the more, since the coagulated blood sealed each finger to the next.

The first blow had been the easiest to deliver. Nonetheless, it was the most distressing. In keeping with tradition, it was dealt at neck level, stopped by the clavicle, generating a brief cry: stupor or pain? The second had reached the groin, and this woke his survival instinct. Only then did the wounded comprehend what was happening to him, and try to defend himself. But how could he? It was too late. Too weak already, he tried to grab his assailant, but by then the steel had penetrated the flesh of his back, eliciting cries like a baying beast.

Resigned, submissive, or simply too weak to attempt any real resistance, he set about trying to avoid the blows. His utterly torn hands were testament of this futile attempt.

His body now lay grotesque, perforated by wounds. The blood had little by little ceased to flow before finally congealing. Twenty-three blows had befallen him, causing as many penetrations. Some were beautiful, clean, and deep. Others benign: The flesh was barely opened, protected by bones and other obstacles of the human anatomy. The blade bore the stigmata of this skirmish. Chipped in places, it had not gotten through the ribs. Its tip was broken, but it had victoriously popped out several teeth.

The face, itself, was unrecognizable. Eyeless, frozen in a rictus attesting to the many pains experienced, it bore a horrid crater on the left side.

The start of a sanguine smile that made him pathetic parody of Gwynplaine. A vulgar copy. That's all he'd ever been, the shit!

The fingers finally relaxed and let the knife fall onto the cadaver. Sticky with blood, they had lost some of their mobility. Even so, they seized a jerry can full of gasoline, and popped off the cap without difficulty. The flow of hydrocarbons spread over the body, cleaning the wounds and diluting the red pond that had congealed on the ground.

No public cremation for that asshole. Wanting to be Caesar does not make it so....