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THE FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

The death of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE led to thirteen years of war and ultimately to the end of the Roman Republic. By 30 BCE, Caesar's most trusted lieutenant and the last queen of Egypt would be dead, and a young man Caesar had quietly groomed as his successor would become his adopted son and the most powerful man in Rome for over forty years The story begins in Egypt.

A Family Feud in Egypt

Julius Caesar arrived in Egypt in pursuit of a rival general named Pompey. There, the thirteen-year-old King Ptolemy XIII greeted Caesar with Pompey's decapitated head. Caesar soon found himself caught in the middle of a feud within Egypt's ruling Ptolemaic family. King Ptolemy XII had willed his throne to his son, Ptolemy XIII, and his twenty-one-year-old daughter, Cleopatra. The pair were to rule Egypt as brother and sister and as husband and wife, but Ptolemy XIII seized total power and forced his older sister from the throne.

Cleopatra Meets Caesar

When Cleopatra learned Caesar was in Egypt, she saw an opportunity to return to power. According to legend, she arranged to smuggle herself into Caesar's suite wrapped in a carpet. When it was unrolled, Caesar found the former queen inside.

Cleopatra convinced Caesar to remove Ptolemy and return her to power. Caesar's army defeated Ptolemy XIII's forces in battle, and the young king drowned while fleeing across the Nile River. Cleopatra returned to power and, following her family's royal tradition of marrying close relatives to keep power within the family, married her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV.

Caesar and Cleopatra

The 52-year-old Caesar began a love affair with the much younger Cleopatra. The pair traveled the Nile together where Caesar witnessed Cleopatra's luxurious lifestyle. Although Caesar commanded Rome's greatest army, the Egyptians worshipped Cleopatra as a goddess. Soon after their voyage, Cleopatra gave birth to Caesar's only son, Caesarion.

Octavian Becomes Caesar's Heir

Caesar was murdered in 44 BCE, plunging Rome back into civil war. Caesar's most trusted general, Marc Antony, took control of Rome, but the dictator surprised everyone. His will named Octavian, his eighteen-year-old grandnephew, as his heir, or the person who would inherit his wealth and position. Octavian instantly became one of the wealthiest men in Rome, but even more important, Roman law allowed him to call himself Caesar.

Octavian came to Rome to claim his inheritance, but Marc Antony dismissed the young heir. Octavian raised an army of soldiers loyal to Julius Caesar, plunging Rome into months of turmoil. Eventually, Octavian and Marc Antony agreed to an uneasy truce, and Antony married Octavian's sister to seal the alliance.

Antony and Cleopatra

Octavian and Marc Antony formed the Second Triumvirate with a third general named Lepidus. Octavian remained in Rome while Antony took control of the empire's eastern provinces. In 41 BCE, Antony summoned Cleopatra to explain her loyalty during Rome's civil war. Instead, he fell in love with the Egyptian queen and moved to Alexandria to be with her.

Cleopatra regained sole control of Egypt after the mysterious poisoning of Ptolemy XIV. Antony and Cleopatra fell in love and had three children together. Antony hoped to defeat Octavian and rule Rome and Egypt with Cleopatra, but Octavian used their relationship to his advantage. He convinced the Roman people that Cleopatra had bewitched Antony and that Antony planned to give Rome's empire to a foreign queen. Octavian declared war on Cleopatra, forcing

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Marc Antony to choose between Cleopatra and Rome. Antony chose Cleopatra.

The Battle of Actium

Octavian's forces defeated Antony and Cleopatra's ships in the Battle of Actium on the Mediterranean Sea in 31 BCE. Antony and Cleopatra managed to escape, but Marc Antony committed suicide as Octavian's army approached. When Cleopatra learned of Antony's death, she chose to end her life on her own terms. According to legend, she wrapped an asp around her arm. The venomous snake, a symbol of Egyptian royalty, ended both Cleopatra's life and the rule of the Ptolemys. Octavian stood alone as Rome's most powerful man and would soon reshape Rome forever.

Fill in the Blanks

Julius Caesar traveled to E__y__t in pursuit of his rival P__m__ey, but the young King P__o__e__y XIII greeted him with Pompey's d__c__p__t__t__d head. Caesar soon became involved in a struggle between Ptolemy and his sister, C__e__p__t__a. According to l__g__nd, Cleopatra secretly entered Caesar's rooms w__a__p__d in a c__r__et and convinced him to restore her to the throne. After Ptolemy XIII d__o__n__d while fleeing Caesar's army, C__e__p__t__a became queen again. She and Caesar fell in love and had a s__n named C__e__a__i__n. After Caesar was m__r__e__ed in 44 BCE, his a__o__t__d son O__t__v__an challenged M__rc A__t__ny for control of Rome. Antony later fell in love with C__e__p__t__a, giving Octavian the opportunity to turn the R__m__n people against them. Octavian defeated their forces at the B__tt__e of A__t__um in ____BCE. Antony committed s__i__i__e, and Cleopatra soon ended her own life. Their deaths marked the end of the P__o__e__a__c dynasty and cleared the way for Octavian to transform Rome into an empire.

Answer in Complete Sentence

*1. Why do you think Cleopatra was attracted to Julius Caesar? Why do you think Caesar was attracted to Cleopatra?.

*2. Caesar's selection of Octavian as heir was a surprise. Based on your reading of the text, who would you have expected Caesar to have chosen to take his name? Explain your reasoning.

*3. Why do you think Cleopatra committed suicide?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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