

# TIME MACHINE 18

This book is a time machine. Travel back 2,100 years and find Julius Caesar's battle sword.



**SWORD OF  
CAESAR**

**This book is  
your passport  
into time.**



**Can you survive in  
the Roman Empire?  
Turn the page to  
find out.**

# TIME MACHINE 18

## SWORD OF

## CAESAR

**Robin and Bruce Stevenson**

**illustrated by Richard Hescox**



**A Byron Preiss Book**

## **For Abigail**

Copyright © 2001, 1987 by Byron Preiss Visual Publications

“Time Machine” is a registered trademark of  
Byron Preiss Visual Publications, Inc. Registered in the  
U.S. Patent and Trademark office.

Cover painting by Richard Hescox.  
Cover design by Alex Jay.

An [ipicturebooks.com](http://www.ipicturebooks.com) ebook

[ipicturebooks.com](http://www.ipicturebooks.com)  
24 West 25th St., 11th fl.  
NY, NY 10010

The [ipicturebooks](http://www.ipicturebooks.com) World Wide Web Site Address is:  
<http://www.ipicturebooks.com>

Original ISBN: 0-553-26531-8  
eISBN: 1-59019-083-1

# ATTENTION TIME TRAVELER!

This book is your time machine. Do not read it through from beginning to end. In a *moment* you will receive a mission, a special task that will take you to another time period. As you face the dangers of history, the Time Machine often will give you options of where to go or what to do.

This book also contains a Data Bank to tell you about the age you are going to visit. You can use this Data Bank to travel more safely through time. Or you can take your chances without reading it. It is up to you to decide.

In the back of this book is a Data File. It contains hints to help you if you are not sure what choice to make. The following symbol appears next to any choices for which there is a hint in the Data File.



To complete your mission as quickly as possible, you may wish to use the Data Bank and the Data File together.

There is one correct end to this Time Machine mission. You must reach it or risk being stranded in time!

# **THE FOUR RULES OF TIME TRAVEL**

As you begin your mission, you must observe the following rules. Time Travelers who do not follow these rules risk being stranded in time.

1. You must not kill any person or animal.
2. You must not try to change history. Do not leave anything from the future in the past.
3. You must not take anybody when you jump in time. Avoid disappearing in a way that scares people or makes them suspicious.
4. You must follow instructions given to you by the Time Machine. You must choose from the options given to you by the Time Machine.

# YOUR MISSION

**Your mission is to travel back to ancient Rome, meet Julius Caesar, and discover why his favorite battle sword disappeared during the course of history.**

Julius Caesar was one of the greatest statesmen and military geniuses the world has ever known. He ruled Rome from 49 to 44 B.C. With his sword he conquered Gaul, Britain, and much of the Mediterranean. His armies served him loyally; he was admired and respected by the common people.

However, on March 15, 44 B.C., at the height of his power, he was assassinated while in the Senate. Rome lost its most important leader, a man whose influence has survived far longer than the glory that was Rome. Many of Caesar's social reforms and laws affect our lives even today.

To complete your mission, you must go back to the time of Caesar and the emperors who came after him. You will witness events that helped to shape the Roman Empire and those that finally led to its fall.



To activate the Time Machine, [click here](#).

**TIME TRAVEL  
ACTIVATED  
Stand by for Equipment**



**[Click Here](#)**

# EQUIPMENT

To blend in with the fashions of ancient Rome, you will wear a short tunic under a longer woolen cloak. The streets of ancient Rome are paved, so you can wear leather sandals without getting your feet dirty. Just be sure that your shoes are not red, because that color is reserved for members of the Senate.

You will take with you a pouch of *sesterces*, the coins Romans used for money.



To begin your mission now, [click here](#).



To learn more about the time to which you will be traveling, [click here](#).

# DATA BANK

These facts about ancient Rome and Julius Caesar will help you to complete your mission.

1) From 508 to 30 B.C., Rome was a republic, in which supreme power was held by elected officers and representatives in the Senate and the Comitia (popular assembly) who governed according to law.

2) From 145 to 30 B.C., Rome was in a state of social revolution. With the annexation of a large amount of new territory, many people felt that rule by a republican government was no longer possible.

3) In 60 B.C., Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus formed the First Triumvirate—a kind of three-part dictatorship. It was designed to oppose all Senate legislation that any one of them didn't like and to bring order to Rome after a century of revolt.

4) As a young man, Julius Caesar was wild, reckless, ambitious, and a known playboy. However, with new military and political responsibilities, he underwent a transformation and grew into a great leader and statesman.

5) The conquest of Gaul (which is present-day France), Spain, and Africa lifted Caesar from the verge of ruin to the height of importance, wealth, and power. His victories also brought huge sums of money into the Roman treasury.

6) For centuries, armies were forbidden to enter the city of Rome. It was feared that, in case of a military coup, soldiers would support their generals, since they owed their pay and fortune to these men and not to the Empire. Many of the legions loyal to Caesar were made up of Gallic, not Roman, soldiers.

7) From 59 B.C., when Caesar held his first consulship, his political foes had marked him for proscription. Politicians could have their enemies declared as outlaws and condemned to death or banish-

# THE ROMAN EMPIRE UNDER JULIUS CAESAR



ment without benefit of evidence or trial. While Caesar held office or command, he would be protected. But as a private citizen, he could be proscribed and condemned to death.

8) Caesar and Pompey, divided by political intrigue, became enemies. At the battle of Pharsalus in 48 B.C., Caesar defeated Pompey. The civil war was actually created by the rivalry between the armies of the two strongest men in Rome.

9) For many decades before the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, the mainly aristocratic Senate had been inefficient and corrupt. Votes and armies could be bought. Many Roman statesmen felt that a guide or dictator was needed to restore order to Rome.

10) Caesar went to Egypt and helped to restore the banished queen Cleopatra to her throne. They fell in love, and he brought her back with him to Rome. This displeased many Romans, who feared that Caesar would move the seat of power from Rome to Egypt.

11) By 45 B.C., many aristocrats and high-ranking Senate officials feared loss of both wealth and power if too many social reforms were imposed upon them. They also feared a monarchy, because giving any one person absolute rule would restrict their own power and influence.

12) Marcus Brutus, who was known as one of the most virtuous men in Rome, was Caesar's close friend and ally. It was rumored that Brutus was Caesar's son.

13) Gaius Cassius was second only to Caesar in importance. His personal jealousy of Caesar outweighed his duty to Rome.

14) Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son, Octavian, later known as Augustus, became emperor of Rome after Caesar's death. Octavian completed many of the reforms that his uncle had set out to accomplish. He dedicated the Temple of Mars Ultor to Julius Caesar and placed Caesar's battle sword on the altar inside.

15) In A.D. 64, while Nero, the last of the Caesars, was emperor, most of the inner city of Rome burned down and had to be rebuilt.

## TIMELINE

- 100 B.C.: Birth of Julius Caesar
- 60 B.C.: First Triumvirate
- 58 B.C.: Liberation of Gaul; Caesar made governor
- 52 B.C.: Caesar's victory at Alesia
- 49 B.C.: Caesar crosses the Rubicon
- 48 B.C.: Caesar's victory over Pompey at Pharsalus
- 46 B.C.: Caesar elected dictator for ten years
- 44 B.C.: Death of Julius Caesar
- 29 B.C.: Octavian's return to Rome
- 27 B.C.: Octavian renamed Augustus by the Senate
- A.D. 2: Dedication of Temple of Mars Ultor
- A.D. 37: Caligula becomes emperor
- A.D. 54: Nero becomes emperor. Last of the Caesars
- A.D. 64: Rome destroyed by fire

**DATA BANK COMPLETED.**  
**CLICK HERE TO BEGIN**  
**YOUR MISSION.**



**Don't forget, when you see this symbol,  
you can click it to check the Data File for  
a hint.**





**Y**ou are standing on a deserted street in ancient Rome. It's a damp winter night in early March 44 B.C. In the distance you hear the rumbling of wheels over stone pavement. Although it's quite dark, the city is mysteriously alive with a clatter of traffic. The road is illuminated only by the full moon. You start to move toward the busy area when you become aware of voices murmuring in secrecy under the cover of the howling wind. The words you overhear stop you in your tracks.

"He must be killed with haste."

You spot three men huddled beneath a nearby marble colonnade. Making sure that nobody sees you, you edge closer to the group to hear more clearly.

"The fifteenth of the month, no later," says one of the men.

"The ides? But why?" asks another.

"Have you not heard that he plans to make himself emperor?" says the first.

"That is idle gossip, Cassius."

"Your friendship blinds you, Brutus. Does he not go about wearing the purple robes of kings?"

The man called Brutus does not reply.

"And does he not wear a laurel wreath as a crown?" asks the third man.

"It is merely to hide his baldness, Trebonius," answers Brutus.

"Yes, and the royal diadem would hide it even more!"

"He refused it thrice when offered by Marc Antony," argues

Brutus.

“And had the refusal duly noted in the Senate record! Can you not see through it, despite your fondness for him?” demands Cassius. “You must join us, Brutus. He mocks your loyalty.”

“He pardoned us at Pharsalus, Cassius, when we took Pompey’s cause as ours.”

“And now he plans to rule us all. No man can be allowed such power.”

You realize that these men are talking about *Julius Caesar*! They’re plotting to kill him!

At that moment the wind catches your cloak and flaps it in plain sight of the three schemers.

“Who goes there?” hisses Trebonius.

You turn and start to run.

“Grab that youth!” cries Cassius.

“Better to disperse at once!” Brutus urges the other two men.

“Stop!” commands Cassius. “Identify yourself!”

But you don’t dare stop!



[Click here.](#)



**Y**ou've spent all day working in Caesar's library. Caesar and his wife, Calpurnia, must be dining out tonight, because he hasn't returned, and she is just going out. She's dressed elegantly in a flowing gown of pale green silk trimmed with golden thread. She wears a necklace and matching earrings of gold, and her hair is piled in elaborate braids on top of her head.

You and Silvius' father return to his house accompanied by a servant. Darius explains, "The city is safe enough by day, but never venture forth alone at night."

Rather than a grand palace filled with gold and silverplate, Silvius and his family live in a modest yet comfortable apartment building, called an *insula*, and dine on earthenware. The wooden tables are solid but plain. Caesar's tables, you had noticed, were of rare, inlaid citrus wood and stood on legs of precious ivory.

One window of Silvius' house faces the street; the rest are *paint-ed* on walls to *look* like windows. There is less marble than at Caesar's *domus* and more stone. But there is a pleasant courtyard and much laughter among Silvius' mother and sisters.

After dinner Silvius says, "Tomorrow is a holiday. I shall have my very first shave. Afterward, I'll dedicate my whiskers to Jove." He shows you a tiny silver casket, his parents' gift to mark the occasion. "Then we'll see the gladiator games. The whole city will be there—even Caesar."

You're excited but also a little reluctant; Silvius has told you the fights are to the death—that's not exactly your idea of entertain-

ment! Still, you haven't seen much of Rome by day, and perhaps Silvius will give you a tour.

What about your mission? you wonder. Well, Silvius said that Caesar will be at the games. It might be a chance to meet him. But would he wear his sword to the arena? Maybe instead you should jump back to meet Caesar as a young man. In his youth, he may have fought more battles—and worn his sword more often.



**Stay with Silvius and go to the games tomorrow. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump back to 80 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**T**he light of the moon guides you to the imposing Roman Forum. The wind dies, shrouding the stately Senate Curia in eerie silence, and the sudden stillness causes the sound of your footsteps to echo.

Then you hear a voice.

“Father? I-is that y-you?” a boy asks nervously as he steps into the light. He wears a tunic and sandals like yours. Soft black curls frame his face and features.

You stop and your heart pounds like a drum as the boy comes closer.

He relaxes when he sees you’re his age. “I hope I didn’t frighten you,” he says. “I’m meeting my father. My name is Silvius Flavius Lucius,” he says. “What’s yours?”

You tell him, and he asks, “What brings you here so late? The city is unsafe at night. I’m alone only because my servant took ill and I sent him home.”

You hesitate and then say, “I . . . I lost my way. I’m new in the city.”

“Silvius! There you are!” calls a warm, kind voice. A tall, gray-haired man wearing a long cloak joins the two of you.

“Father!” Silvius says, running to embrace the man. He introduces you to Darius Flavius Lucius, and before you know it, you’ve been invited to their home for dinner.

On the way there, you think of the plot you overheard. What can you do with this information? You’d like to warn Caesar, but you



know the rules of Time Travel don't permit this. Perhaps you could consult with someone who is close to those in power.

You're wondering whether Darius Flavius Lucius is a friend or enemy to Julius Caesar when Silvius asks, "What will you do in Rome?"

"Well," you say, thinking quickly, "I'm looking for work."

Silvius' father says, "I'm seeking an assistant. Can you read and write?"

You tell him that you can.

"Good! I am secretary to Caesar, and I need someone to copy and file all that he dictates to me."

Work for Julius Caesar! You try not to sound too excited as you say, "That sounds like an excellent job."

"Fine," says Silvius' father. "You can begin tomorrow. Meanwhile, you're our guest."

The three of you enter his house. You can hardly wait until morning!

The next day you accompany Darius Flavius to Caesar's home atop the Palatine Hill. The magnificent villa has beautiful murals painted on the walls and colorful mosaic-tile floors.

Caesar is not at home, so Darius shows you around the villa before you begin work. Inside you find an open courtyard and colonnade.

"This is the peristyle," says Darius. "Come in and I'll show you the atrium."

You enter an enormous room. It's very bright, with light coming from a square opening in the roof. You've never seen a house so grand!

The library in which you are put to work has shelves crammed with parchments and rolled scrolls. Darius instructs you to arrange them according to subject matter. Many scrolls recount Caesar's military campaigns. You'd like to read *The Gallic Wars*, a history written by Caesar; it might enable you to know more about him—and staying here, you might find his sword in the *domus*. Of course, Caesar may have used his favorite sword to conquer the land that is

now France. Maybe you should go there. Do you stay here or jump back in time to Caesar's most important campaign in Gaul?



**Go to Gaul in 52 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Stay in Rome in 44 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



It's the afternoon of the eighth day of battle. Incredibly, the Roman lines have held against the 250,000 reinforcements on one side, and Vercingetorix, who has hurled his troops against the Romans day and night from inside the walled city of Alesia.

You climb to the top of the earth fortification. The ditch below is filled with the bodies of dead Gallic warriors. There are moans of pain from the wounded, but few are Roman.

You climb back down and look around for Caesar or Scriptus. You find Scriptus bandaging the bloody gash in a soldier's arm. "Where have you been?" he asks. "I thought you'd been killed!"

"No . . . I managed somehow," you answer quickly. "And Caesar? Is he all right?"

"That man never ceases to amaze me. It's as if he doesn't sleep. No wonder the soldiers are so loyal to him."

You're about to agree when you notice Caesar moving among his legionaries, followed by a group of centurions. You rush over to them. "The reinforcement armies have lost their will," you hear Caesar say. "They're no match for our superior discipline."

At that moment a chilling shriek pierces your ears. The portals of Alesia have opened, and Vercingetorix rushes forward at the head of what is left of his army.

Caesar raises his sword and descends to the battle. You follow at his heels.

"Battalions to the attack—*attack!*" Caesar cries. Together the

front line of the inner ring climbs over the corpses in the ditch and, with shields held tightly together, advances toward the charging Gauls.

“Battalions into triple-line formations—divide!” As you watch, the single line becomes three lines of one-hundred-men clusters. The lines advance, throwing the Gauls into a panic. All around you is the clanging of clashing swords.

*Swoosh!* An arrow zooms over your head and misses you by an inch. Directly in front of you, Vercingetorix is fighting wildly. But under the crush of the Roman legions, the Gallic king and his warriors are forced to retreat to the gates of the city.

The gates close with a dull, grinding *boom*, and for the first time in weeks the clashes of sword upon sword are stilled.

The legionaries tend to their wounded. Water carriers circulate with buckets. You take the small metal cup and drink your first sip of water in over a day.

Even Caesar shares the bucket with his men. Slowly he removes his helmet and, pouring some of the water into the palm of his hand, bathes his blood-and-grime-soaked face.

Something catches your eye. Instantly you cry, “Caesar—look out!” A wounded Gaul lying on the ground at Caesar’s back has risen to his knees, and with his final strength he arcs his slashing sword at Caesar’s unprotected head.

Caesar whirls about and, with his own sword, knocks the man’s weapon aside. The Gaul dies at his feet.

For a moment Caesar stares at the body. Then he looks at you. “I owe you my life, my young friend,” he says softly and puts his hand on your shoulder. For the first time you see the exhaustion in his eyes.

“I will not forget this,” says Caesar. “How may I reward you?”

You think about your mission. You can already jump backward and forward in time. But once you’ve jumped, you need a way to enter places that only a Caesar can go.

“I’d like a passport to take me anywhere in the Empire, if that’s possible,” you say.

“I shall give you a diploma with my seal. It will entitle you to travel wherever you like. You have been a great help to Scriptus, and we are all grateful.”

At that very moment, the portals of Alesia swing open. A lone figure appears. It is Vercingetorix. He carries his helmet under his arm and holds his head high. When he reaches the two of you, he silently lays his weapons at Caesar’s feet.

The Gallic king is led away under armed guard. You accompany Caesar to his tent, where he writes out your passport diploma. Handing it to you he says, “And now, I need a few moments’ rest.”

You thank him, and tucking the diploma into your tunic, you leave his tent.

You think back over the past three weeks. Caesar’s army has turned defeat into victory. His sword has won the day and changed the face of history. That reminds you of your mission and of the plot against him. You can find an isolated spot and jump to another important event in Caesar’s career. Or you can jump ahead and try to talk with Brutus.



**Jump to the Rubicon in 49 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Find Brutus in 44 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**O**ver the course of the next two weeks, Caesar's men build a second, longer outer wall to face Vercingetorix's reinforcements. Thousands of brawny Roman soldiers are now spread out in two concentric battlements surrounding the walled city of Alesia.

You realize that there's no place to hide here!

You mention the lack of a hiding place to the man next to you— not letting him know why you're concerned, of course.

"Well . . . we'll just have to fight all the harder!" the scarred veteran responds. "He knows us well, our Caesar does. We've been with him in tight corners before, and we'll probably be there again. But I'd follow him before any other."

As night falls without a sign of the enemy, you grow restless. You walk carefully over the outstretched limbs of soldiers lying side by side, each man exhausted from the task of digging. Yet few can sleep. Perhaps, like you, they're imagining what lies ahead.

You find Scriptus, who is huddled in the dark. Leaning against him, you try to sleep.

*What's that?* You bolt upright. You dreamed you were being run over by a train! But there are no trains here! Still, you're awake, and the trainlike sound is even louder!

All the soldiers are on their feet. They're buckling their chest and shoulder armor, adjusting their helmets, and assuming battle formation.

You realize that the "train" is a sea of stomping legs, pounding



the dew-soaked earth! Waking up fully, you jump to your feet and pull Scriptus up with you. Now you can see more clearly, and what you see fills you with dread—thousands and thousands of men advancing toward the camp!

Caesar, splendid in his bronze armor and scarlet cloak, speaks. “Comrades! Fellow soldiers! To the task at hand! For Rome!”

He draws his sword. There it is—but is it the *same* sword you’re after?

*Whizz! Whomp!* A first volley of spears and sling-stones sails against the locked shields of the Romans. With loud cries the horde of Gallic invaders explodes forward, wave upon wave of men against the outer and inner ring. By now the portals of Alesia have been thrown open, and Vercingetorix and his armies are attacking the inner ring with full force.

On command, the double wall of Roman soldiers kneels. Squads of spearmen, archers, and slingers fall in behind and take deadly aim at the screaming Gauls, who scramble up the deep trenches on both sides.

“If we can hold strong for a week, they’re ours,” Caesar tells his men. “They’ll run out of stores by then.”

“Yes,” says a soldier, “but so will we!”

You don’t know if *you* can hold strong for a week! You see a large siege tower that was tipped over to provide a barricade. When no one is looking you crawl inside the tower and jump.



**Jump ahead seven days. [Click here.](#)**



**I**t's March 52 B.C. You're in a Roman camp facing the walled Gallic city of Alesia.

You hear a thunderous noise and turn around quickly. Hundreds of feet are marching on the still-frozen earth. A shrill voice barks commands.

"Squads divide into squares—divide!"

You see ranks of helmeted, armored men draw together and form an impenetrable square. Their body-length shields, locked together in close-order drill, dully reflect the dawn's light. Hundreds of men move as one, like an incredible, well-oiled machine.

*Whomp!* You're knocked flat on your back. You stare up into two ferocious brown eyes, framed by a plumed metal helmet.

"What are you doing here in the middle of drill?" bellows the man. "Stop gaping and stand off to the side or you'll be trampled!"

You're caught momentarily speechless. Suddenly the helmet comes off—and you're staring into a reddened, sweating face.

"Caesar, this youth must have sneaked into camp," says another soldier grabbing you roughly by the arm.

"Well," demands Caesar, "answer the question! What are you doing here?"

"Actually, sir," you say, thinking fast, "I'm here to see if your chief scribe needs an assistant."

"And just in time, too! He moves with the speed of a tortoise, that scribe of mine. The presence of younger blood may put

some fire under him. Go to my tent—the one with the purple banner and bronze standards of Rome. Tell Scriptus Sempronius I sent you.”

He flashes you a smile. “Remember, young one, keep your eyes open. Your life depends on it!” He dons his helmet and, with a swirl of his red cloak, turns back to the drill.

Dodging the squads of marching men, you reach the fortified tent area. The edge of the camp is staked out by a twelve-foot-high turf wall facing the walled city of Alesia. You climb to the top to look over the edge. Below, you see a moat filled with water. Beyond are a fence of tangled branches and rows of circular pits. The pits are filled with sharp stakes!

You climb back down and head for Caesar’s tent. The flap is open. Inside you find a man seated on a camp stool copying words onto a parchment scroll. “This will never do,” he mutters to himself. “The man expects us *all* to have his energy. Not *ten* have it!”

“Hello,” you say. “Are you Scriptus Sempronius? I’m supposed to assist you.”

“Oh, no. Not *another* with unbounded energy!” Then he smiles. “Well, perhaps you can be of use. Here, let’s see how you copy these notes.”

You’ve copied several pages when suddenly you hear the pounding of hooves. You rush outside, where Caesar and scores of legionaries are crowding around a rider who has dismounted. You push past the soldiers until you can see the rider. He is bloody and barely able to speak. From the tip of his spear he unrolls a tiny scroll.

Caesar reads it aloud. “From all over Gaul, two hundred and fifty thousand men have banded together and are coming to the aid of Vercingetorix, who has taken refuge in the city of Alesia!”

A hush falls over the soldiers. For an instant Caesar, too, is silent. Then, quickly, his whole body seems recharged.

“Well now, my fellow soldiers! We may number only thirty thousand, but with a change of strategy, we will defeat our enemy

Vercingetorix and his rebel tribes!”

Two hundred and fifty thousand enemy soldiers! *What* is Caesar going to do? You’ve *got* to stay and find out!



**Click here.**



It's late in the day, January 10, 49 B.C. You're in the middle of a Roman army camp in southern Gaul. A bitter winter rain soaks you to the bone. The sky is alive with jagged flickers of blinding light, and the ground seems to roll under your feet with the boom of thunder.

All around you, Roman soldiers are huddled in small groups. You hear muted snatches of conversation between the blasts of thunder.

"This is the first time I've ever seen Caesar taking so much time with the auguries," says one grizzled legionary.

"Yes, but look—the lightning strikes from right to left. It's not a good omen!"

"It's as if he's trying to appease the gods because he knows what he does goes against their will," a younger soldier says.

"It's not so much the gods as the senators and their laws. Caesar is governor of Gaul. If he enters Italy with his legions, he's an outlaw. If you ask me, I think the Senate's just afraid we'd come down and help Caesar clean out the whole lot of them. And you know something? They'd be right!"

"They don't look out for us. Caesar does!"

The men suddenly see you standing next to them. Their conversation halts abruptly.

"What is it, youngster? Nothing better to do than sit around and listen to your elders gossip?"

"I'm looking for Caesar," you say. A legionary gruffly points you

in the direction of Caesar's tent. You find it, but neither Caesar nor Scriptus is inside. Instead you see them standing by the banks of the stream bordering the front of the camp. You run over, approaching them from behind, to tug at Scriptus' sleeve. He turns and his eyes light up. "By Jove, look who we have here! Where have you been?"

"Traveling," you reply quickly.

"You certainly do pop about," says Caesar.

"I'm very glad to see you. And I know Scriptus is, too." But his eyes quickly leave you to gaze off in the distance across the river.

"You wouldn't believe what these last several years have been like," says Scriptus, dragging you away. "Dawn to dusk, day in and day out. It never seems to end."

There's a blare of trumpets. Masses of soldiers crowd around Caesar and his centurions at the bank of the small river. Caesar raises his hand for silence.

"*Commilitones* . . . my fellows soldiers! I have always been honest with you. I will not conceal the truth from you now. Once we cross the Rubicon, I know not what lies in store. What is worse, I must tell you that all our money is gone. I have nothing with which to pay you."

For a moment there is silence. Then a single voice from the back of the crowd cries out, "Caesar, you've always been for us. It's our turn to be for you!"

The speaker, the old legionary you overheard earlier, steps forward from the crowd. Reaching inside his tunic, he pulls forth a pouch of coins and gently places them at Caesar's feet. Within minutes, the single pouch has become a small pile. You add a handful of your own *sesterces* on top, then step back with the others.

Tears well up in Caesar's eyes. His hand rests on the hilt of his battle sword. The words he speaks come slowly.

"My fellow soldiers . . . from the bottom of my heart, I thank you. So be it—the die is cast!"

This little stream must be the Rubicon!

"Scriptus," you ask, turning to him, "some of the soldiers say that if Caesar crosses the Rubicon he goes against the law of Rome



and wages war against the state.”

“No, my young friend. It may well be the opposite. The law of Rome—and the Republic as we know it—may never be the same, ever again!”

You are moved by what you have seen, but you must continue your mission. Caesar’s sword is at his side. You must learn what happens to it later.

You can jump to Pharsalus, where Caesar fought Pompey, to see if Caesar wears his sword then. Or you can jump to the time when Caesar brought Cleopatra to Rome—maybe he’ll have to defend her with the sword. Of course, you can also jump to the night before the ides of March to see if Caesar knows of the plot against him—if so, he’ll have his sword nearby.



**Jump ahead to Pharsalus in 48 B.C.**

**[Click here.](#)**



**Jump ahead to find Cleopatra in Rome,  
47 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump ahead to March 14, 44 B.C.  
[Click here.](#)**



**A**s carts and wagons cross the narrow, congested streets, and drivers shout at one another through the night-long traffic jam, you lie awake in your bed in Silvius' house wondering what to do about the plot you overheard. The day begins, before you even close your eyes, with Silvius urging you to get up.

Silvius is dressed and ready to leave by the time you enter the atrium. He carries his silver box and stops to kiss his mother good-bye. She is assigning tasks to the servants for the evening's celebration of Silvius' first shave. "Don't eat too much along the way," she says as you leave. "We shall have a feast tonight."

Silvius leads you out onto the street. The sun is barely up, but the city is already teeming with crowds. Shops are open for business. Aromatic smells of hot sausages and freshly baked breads mingle with the stench of garbage that has not been carted away during the night. You almost lose Silvius twice as you follow him through the shouting, squeezing throng of people.

At last you reach the barber shop, where Silvius is to have his first shave. It's a store-front on the ground floor of a five-story apartment building.

You avert your eyes from the barber's razor, which is made of iron and doesn't look very sharp. Only water—without lather—is applied to Silvius' face. Your friend utters no sound, but when the ritual is over, he breathes a deep sigh of relief—and dabs at the cuts inflicted by the blunt instrument.

The tiny hairs are put into the silver casket, and you take a detour



to the Temple of Jove so Silvius can dedicate his whiskers. Then you continue on to the arena.

“We missed the tigers and their tamers,” Silvius says. “And also the buffalo duel with the elephant. That was earlier in the day.”

“Have we missed Caesar, too?” you ask Silvius.

“We must have,” he says. “I don’t see him anywhere.”

But you *haven’t* missed the fights between the gladiators and lions, panthers, and leopards. It’s true the men are convicted criminals, and they’re armed with hunting spears and glowing firebrands—some even carry bows or lances. Still, something about the “sport” sickens you. “They’re killing the animals just for fun!” you say to Silvius.

“Yes, but if they don’t, the men will be killed by the animals,” he answers.

One gladiator uses a red cape to taunt a bull and just misses being torn to shreds when the angry animal rushes at him. The next man fights a lion and is tossed in the air like a rag doll before he hits the ground.

You can’t watch any more of this! You turn your eyes from the bloody sight and look instead at the mass of eager spectators.

Suddenly, you spot a leopard—but he’s not in the arena! He must have escaped from his underground cage, and now he has broken into the stands! The crowd begins to scream in horror. The poor beast seems as frightened by the mob as the people are by him!

You feel yourself jostled by the panicking crowd, and all at once you’re shoved—right into the path of the leopard! You back slowly away. Turning, you spy the opening to a dark passageway. You hope no other beasts are lurking there.

Now—as fast as you can—run inside and jump!



Quickly, **click here.**



**Y**ou're in the middle of a crowded street. It's late at night in the year 80 B.C. There's no moon, and strange shouts and sounds lead you to think that people are being robbed everywhere, or else fights have broken out through the entire city.

A group of older youths rushes past. In their haste, one of them runs smack into you and knocks you over.

"Watch where you're going!" he demands angrily. From his breath in your face you can tell that he's drunk too much wine.

"I d-didn't trip you on p-purpose," you say, trying to get up in the darkness.

"No matter! The Senate condemns people to death for less than tripping! When I'm consul, you'll have to watch your step!"

He and his friends laugh at his pun. You don't remind him that *he* ran into *you*!

"Come on, Gaius," says one of his friends, "you're frightening the young thing!"

"You ought to be home asleep!" the one who ran into you says. "You might have run up against a cutthroat, instead of a Caesar!" He laughs again.

"Let's go!" urges one of his friends. "You promised we'd be at Ostia before daybreak."

"So I did," answers Caesar. "All right. Ostia it is. We'll survey my naval fleet and drink a toast with the rising sun!"

The merrymakers forget about you and go along their way.

Can *this* be the same Julius Caesar of your mission? Is *he* going to head a fleet?

You'd better find out. Caesar and his friends can ride to Ostia. You can jump to the seaport. But why not jump ahead in time to see if he actually will have his own navy?



**Jump ahead to Ostia in 78 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou jumped too fast—and landed in an underground chamber. You hear the roaring of a crowd.

“What is this place?” you ask a man who is sharpening a sword.

“Why, the Colosseum—what’d you think?”

The Colosseum! What year can it be? You look around. With a sinking feeling you realize that you’re below the arena. You hear fierce growling and wonder if the leopard jumped with you. But you see no animals.

“They’re in cages till it’s their turn,” says a gladiator standing nearby, noticing your concern. “Just as we are!” He laughs, but you don’t see the joke.

Confused, you ask, “What year is this?”

“What happened, friend? Get hit on the head too many times?” He laughs again. “Why, it’s the Roman year 85. You all right?”

You nod. But you don’t like it. This new amphitheater made of huge stone blocks may be *colossal* in comparison with the wooden arena you went to with Silvius, but the games still pit men against animals, and the combat is just as deadly as before.

“Which class of gladiator are you?” asks the man. “Do you fight man or beast?”

“I-I’m not a g-gladiator,” you say.

“Well, you are now. Maybe a fat rhino is your fancy?” He laughs over his own joke till he’s in tears.

*You’ve got to get out of this place!*

“A few more minutes and it’ll all begin!” says the man as he fas-



tens his shield. He actually seems excited!

You hear a blare of trumpets, and you watch as pairs of armed gladiators start to line up at the entrance to the arena. You're shoved along with them.

"We'll go in twos," says your companion. "If we live, we may win silver dishes. You should see the golden bowl I was awarded last time when I gored a lion!"

The first team enters the arena. The crowd roars. You hear the gladiators shout in unison, "Hail, Emperor! We who are about to die salute you!"

You bolt and run back down the steps into a dark corner of the underground chamber. Anyplace is better than this!



**Click here.**



It's 78 B.C. and you're at Ostia, the seaport directly southwest of Rome. You've seen a notice posted near a ship. It reads: *Cabin helper wanted. Must read and write. Apply to Caesar's mate.*

"Excuse me," you say to one sailor. "Where's the line for the job interviews?"

"What line?" he asks.

You explain about the notice.

"Oh, that," the man says. "Not many your age who can read or write sign up for ship's duty." He leans in closer. His breath reeks of garlic, and his teeth are stained yellow. "You've got the job if you can stand it."

"Don't I have to meet Caesar?" you ask.

"In good time. He can't be bothered with you. He's got to chart a course to keep us out o' the hands o' pirates. Look lively then."

As you climb aboard, you wonder if this is such a good idea.

But just then, the ship starts to move, so you've accepted the job, like it or not.

The sea is choppy for a full week; each new swell churns your stomach along with the vessel. You're glad Caesar hasn't needed you to read or write *anything*—how could you make out script or steady a stylus in these waters?

You're leaning over the side, watching the water slap against the ship, when suddenly you hear shouts of "*Aheeee!*" followed by thundering noises and loud whooping cries. *The ship is being*



*attacked by pirates!*

*You're being attacked by one pirate in particular—a big, fat, black-haired ogre with the reddest eyes you've ever seen!*

There's no place to go! You dodge around him and start to scramble toward the mast, but the burly pirate is too fast for you. He grabs your ankles and topples you. You feel him roughly tying your ankles together while you struggle. He's much stronger than you and is able to tie your wrists behind your back while you sit helplessly on the deck. You're able to see the pirate ship's gilded mast, purple sails, and glistening silver oars just before a blindfold clamps around your head. You suddenly feel yourself lifted and then flying through the air—you're being tossed overboard, or to who-knows-where!



**Click here.**



**Y**ou're back in Rome. It's March 44 B.C. You're standing outside the modest but elegant *domus* that belongs to Marcus Brutus.

You've obtained a copy of the *Acta Diurna*, a daily scroll listing the activities and events in the city. You plan to deliver it to Brutus as an excuse to talk to him. You knock at the door, and a servant answers.

"I was told to deliver this to Marcus Brutus," you say.

"I'll give it to him," says the servant.

"I . . . uh . . . I was told to deliver it to him personally. There have been complaints that he hasn't been receiving it regularly." You hope you sound convincing.

The servant considers this and finally says, "Well, come in, then. He's in the peristyle." He starts to lead the way, but you need to see Brutus alone.

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," you say. "Just point me in the general direction."

The servant seems relieved. Maybe he has a lot of work to do today. "It's just down that hall to your right," he says.

You thank him and walk past the wall paintings and plants. The hall is cold and not very light. You hear voices and follow the sound.

You slow your steps. One of the men talking is clearly Marcus Brutus. The other voice sounds familiar, but you're not certain whose it is until you hear his words.

“It *has* to be the ides of March. Lucius Cotta plans to move that Caesar be made emperor. All hope of restoring Rome to a republic will be lost!”

“Cassius, that is merely rumor—”

“It is no rumor!” snaps Cassius. “It is fact! Why else would he flaunt his image on coins while he lives? Why else erect a statue of himself at the capitol—beside the statues of ancient kings? A perpetual dictatorship means death to the Empire!”

“There must be another way—one that does not require killing—”

Cassius interrupts. “It is the *only* way.”

Both men are silent for a moment. Then suddenly, Cassius says, “Brutus! I thought you said your servants do not eavesdrop!”

“To my knowledge, they do not,” he says.

“Someone is there, listening—I’m sure of it!”

Your fear of being discovered causes you to drop the rolled-up scroll on the marble floor. It makes just enough noise to bring Cassius to the hall!

Before you even have time to jump, he sees you and approaches! You spin around and hurry down the dim hall. You hope your sense of direction will lead you to the door.

Cassius is right behind you. “Stop!” he shouts. He reaches out to grab your tunic—just as you spot a crack of light on the floor ahead. That’s the door to the street!

You run as fast as your sandals can move along the slippery marble floor. Luckily for you, Cassius loses his step. The stumble doesn’t send him falling, but it slows him down enough for you to open the door, run into the street, and disappear into the crowd.

Over your shoulder you can see Cassius following behind. You spot an open doorway behind a fruit peddler’s stand. Quickly, you dash inside.



[Click here.](#)



Luckily, you've landed on some sacks of grain, which have broken your fall. When the blindfold is removed, you see that you're aboard the pirate ship.

"This boat is reserved for special prisoners!" the pirate captain says with a sneer.

You blink your eyes and look around. In the corner, also tied up, sits another man. The two of you are guarded by your bloodshot-eyed captor and three mangy-looking pirates.

The other prisoner, you suddenly realize, is Julius Caesar! He greets you and says, "I hope you don't mind if I amuse myself by composing poems. It passes the time until we're set free."

You don't understand, so he explains.

"My servants have been sent to raise the ransom of twenty talents. Actually, I've told them to raise it to fifty. Anyway, until they return, we're the guests of these uncivilized wretches!"

You wonder if it's wise to incite the wrath of your captors. "I have some money," you whisper to Caesar as you wiggle to try and reach the pouch inside your tunic.

"Ah, trying to escape?" snarls the red-eyed pirate. He grabs your bound wrists and searches the folds of cloth until he finds the money pouch. He pulls it out and scatters your *sesterces* about. "You think that's all Caesar's worth, eh?" He laughs and his entire belly shakes. "And Caesar says *we* underestimate his value!"

But Caesar is touched by your generous offer. "I thank you just the same, my friend. Now, let me compose a new poem."

Leaning back, he begins to recite aloud.

You're interested to hear Caesar's poetry, but he's quickly interrupted.

"That's awful!" says one pirate.

"Disgusting!" another agrees. "Be quiet! We don't have to listen to this!"

Caesar laughs. "You're all barbarians! I'll see you hang—I promise!"

"Aha, Caesar is a man of his word! I fear for my neck!" taunts a skinny pirate.

When he isn't reciting poetry to pass the time until the ransom is paid, Caesar tells you of his plans. "I want all Rome to be at peace—a good life for the common man."

You already see a change in him after only two years. You're not happy about being captured by pirates, but you're getting to know more about Caesar.

Finally Caesar's servants return with the ransom money. Caesar and you are freed along with the rest of his men, who have been held captive on another ship in the pirate fleet.

"I'm bound for Miletus," Caesar tells you. "I'll gather a fleet and come after these villains. We'll get your *sesterces* back and more!"

One of the pirates hears him and laughs. "What harm can this silly poet do? *Hang* us? *That'll* be the day!"

Caesar ignores the remark. "Well," he asks you, "will you join me?"

How can Caesar carry out his promise? you wonder. He has no money—and no sword.

And *you* have no *sesterces*. You'd better go with Caesar and get your money back.



**Go with Caesar to Miletus. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou climb two flights of stone stairs and then a rickety wooden ladder that groans under each step. It's pitch-black, and you reach the top floor before you hear the sounds of a single soul in this crumbling, stench-ridden tenement.

A door creaks open, and a man's crackly voice asks, "Who's that?"

"I-I'm in danger," you stammer. "I n-need a place to h-hide."

"Are you a thief?" the man asks.

You assure him that you're not.

"Well, come in, come in. Wouldn't matter, anyway. I'm too poor to be robbed."

You enter the stifling, stinking room. As your eyes become accustomed to the dim light of a lone candle, you see that the man is old and wrinkled, with stringy wisps of hair and only two teeth in his mouth.

"Is this your home?" you ask, wondering how anyone can possibly live here.

"It is now," he says. "Here, have a seat." He wipes dirt off a broken stool and swats away a buzzing fly.

"You look hungry," he says. "I was just about to have my supper." From a brazier in the corner he takes a pot and divides its contents into two cracked earthenware bowls. The food looks like cooked cereal, and the gloppy stuff almost sticks in your throat.



“Sorry I can’t offer you water,” he says, “but I must conserve it in case of fire. Have some wine, instead. That’s easier to come by.”

The cup he gives you is filthy, and you’ve never tasted wine before. You pretend to take a sip, just to be polite. But you put the cup down as soon as you can.

“Where do you sleep?” you ask. He points to a wooden pallet covered with straw.

“And where do you bathe?” As soon as you say this, you think maybe it would have been better not to ask that question. But the man’s answer surprises you.

“Why, I go to the public baths each afternoon. They’re not just for the rich, y’know. Sometimes I even take steam with a senator!” His laugh breaks into a wheeze.

“I’m far better off now that Caesar’s our leader,” he tells you. “He’s done great things for the common people.”

You’re amazed that this squalor can be an improvement on anything!

“Oh, I once had a house of my own,” he continues, “but that was in Crassus’ day. Now *Crassus* was a real criminal!”

Crassus! you think. He was part of the First Triumvirate with Pompey and Caesar!

“Crassus was the wealthiest man in Rome,” says the old man. “Y’know how he got that way? He started the first fire brigade—to put out the fires that *he* started! He wanted my property, and I wouldn’t sell. So he burned my house, made me *pay* to put out the fire, and then *he* paid *me* for the worthless ashes—with *my own money!*”

You’re shocked! But your host chuckles philosophically. “At least I’m safe here,” he says. “*Nobody* would want *this* place!”

You hope the candle never falls over in this top-floor tinderbox. There isn’t even a window to climb through or call out for help.

“Yes,” he says, “we live in better times, thanks to Caesar. May the gods grant him long life!”

That reminds you of your mission. You've got to find Caesar—*and* his sword. You thank the old man for his hospitality and cautiously make your way down to the street.



**Click here.**



**Y**ou're aboard Caesar's vessel when his fleet catches up with the pirates, whose ships are moored in the rocky cove of an island. At the sight of the gilded masts and purple sails, you can almost feel the anticipation of Caesar and his men.

"I suggest you stay back," he says. "The fun comes later!" You don't need coaxing!

You hear the clashing of swords, screams and yells, and splashing water as men leap or are tossed overboard. You're free to jump in time, but your curiosity makes you stay to find out who wins—Caesar or the pirates.

At last you hear, "All clear! We've got the ransom money back!" You come out of hiding, and Caesar tosses you your pouch—it's bulging with *sesterces*!

Several small boats are lowered into the water. The pirates, now captives, are chained to one another. Reaching shore, you wade through the shallow water onto the beach nearby.

"So, Caesar," shouts the pirate captain defiantly, "do you plan to hang us?"

"Just as you've said, I'm a man of my word," answers Caesar. "You'll hang." He pauses and then adds, "But I'm also a merciful man." Turning to one of his men, he orders, "Cut their throats! *Then* hang them!"

This isn't your idea of mercy. Caesar places an arm on your shoulder and says, "Well, I've had enough of pirates! I'm off to Rhodes to study philosophy for a while. Care to come along?"

You smile at Caesar's offhand manner, but you decide you'll pass up philosophy for now. This pirate course has taken you too far from your mission.



**Catch up with Caesar at a later time.**  
**[Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou're standing in Caesar's camp on the plains of Pharsalus. It's the evening of August 8, 48 B.C. Even though it's summer, a cool, damp mist rises and sends shivers through you. In the near distance you can see the lights of thousands of campfires. Pompey and his battalions are even closer than you thought!

"Here, youngster, you look lost and hungry." You turn and find yourself by the campfire of three legionaries.

"I am hungry," you say.

"Throw some wood on the fire and take some food." You help yourself to boiled lentils and hard bread and sit on the ground next to the men.

"What do you think of this man Pompey?" asks a soldier. "Our emissaries say he eats his meals on silver plates and that his tents are carpeted and hung with flowers. For him this is a blasted party!"

"It will be a different story tomorrow . . . for all of us," a young legionary says as he stokes the fire. "It's terrible what this civil war has done. My cousin Marcus Tonatus rides in Pompey's cavalry. We could wind up killing each other, all because Caesar and Pompey have become political rivals. Romans fighting Romans—it's just not right!"

"Yes, my friends," another soldier says, "but there's a difference. Pompey's officers execute their captives. Caesar spares his."

"In that case, have some wine. Only the gods know where we'll drink tomorrow!"

You want to find out now. You ask directions to the tent of Scriptus Sempronius and say good night. But as soon as you're out of the soldiers' sight, you jump to the evening after the battle.



**Click here.**



It's an early October morning in 47 B.C. You're standing at the center of the crowded marketplace in Rome. Amid the noisy din you hear whimpering. You elbow your way past several merchants who have gathered at the outdoor snack bar for refreshment and a bit of gossip.

The sniffing sounds grow louder. You notice a large basket of grapes—just as a small hand reaches up from the far side and plucks out a ripe bunch of the fruit.

“Thief!” shouts a fishmonger at the next stall. “I saw that!”

You glance at the shouting woman, then peer behind the basket at the owner of the hand. It's a boy, smaller than you but not much younger.

“You ought to put it back,” you whisper.

“I'm hungry,” he whines. “And I'm lost.”

“A likely story,” scolds the woman.

“I believe him,” you say.

“Fine,” says the fruit vendor, “then *you* can pay for the grapes he stole.”

“I wanted to pay,” says the boy. “But some men stole my money.”

“You're a liar and a thief,” says the fishmonger.

“I'm not! I'm the brother of a queen!”

“Sure, and I'm Julius Caesar's wife!” taunts the woman. To you she says, “Well, are you going to pay for the fruit?”

You take several *sesterces* from your pouch and hand them to the vendor. He pockets the money and says, “All right, no harm done.”



But don't come around here again."

"I didn't lie," the boy tells you as you lead him away. "I *was* hungry. And two men *did* steal my money. They were trying to kidnap me, but I ran fast and got away."

"Why would anyone kidnap you?" you ask.

"I don't know. Maybe because there are people here who are against my sister."

"What do you mean?" you ask. "Who is your sister, anyway?"

"Queen Cleopatra of Egypt," he says, offering you some grapes. "And I'm Ptolemy."

You accept a grape while his words sink in. "You're really the queen's brother?" you ask.

"Yes. I don't lie, no matter what the woman said."

"But why would anyone in Rome be against you or your sister?" you ask.

"My sister says people think Caesar will move the capital to Egypt," he answers.

"Is that likely?" you ask.

"Egypt is very sunny and beautiful."

That's not a valid reason to move the capital, you think.

"My sister says she will rule the entire Mediterranean someday," says Ptolemy. "When she does, I'll ask her to give you a title as reward for saving me."

"Thanks," you say. "But for now, I'll try to help you find your . . . uh, house. . . . Or do you live in a palace?"

He shrugs. "It's not like home. But I would like to find it. I miss my sister."

"Do you see any places that look familiar?" you ask.

"Well, it might be up that hill," he says. "I think I've seen that statue before." He points to a large sculpture of a wolf and two little children.

Together the two of you dodge the bustling mobs of shopkeepers, strolling ladies, and senators coming from the Curia.

Ptolemy leads you up the steep hill, where he stops excitedly in front of the entrance to a *domus*. "This is it! We're here!" he says,

banging on the door. “We found it!”

A servant answers and stares at you. “What do you want? Who are you?” Then he sees Ptolemy. “Oh, my boy! Are you all right? Where have you been? We were so worried!”

“This is my friend, who saved me from harm,” he says. The servant’s attitude changes at once, and you are invited inside.

But instantly you hear a woman’s voice. “Ptolemy! Who have you brought home? I won’t have strangers roaming our apartments—this could be another spy!”

“Oh, no! This is—” he starts, but his sister comes forward and interrupts.

“My young brother has a bad habit of speaking with strangers,” she says to you. “Several times it has proven dangerous. Whoever you are is no concern of mine. But strangers are unwelcome in this house.”

She is slim and pretty, not very tall, and blond hair peeks out from beneath a braided black wig. But her grip on your arm is extremely strong. She guides you to the door with force and dismisses you without another word.

Well, at least you were shown the door by royalty—Queen Cleopatra, herself!

Could Ptolemy be right? Would Caesar move the capital to Egypt? Would it anger his enemies enough to spark a plot to kill him?

A year’s time ought to tell you that. Or maybe it’s better to jump ahead three years. By then, you’ll know if Caesar rules from Egypt or from Rome—and whether his sword is still at his side.



**Jump to 46 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump to 44 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



It's the evening after Caesar's victory over Pompey. You accompany Caesar to Pompey's tent to take inventory of all that Pompey has left behind.

"If there are any food supplies left," Caesar tells a departing messenger, "see that they are equally divided among my men. I could not have survived this day without them." Then he turns to you. "Come, let's have a look inside."

What you see leaves you speechless. The floors of the tent are covered with richly colored rugs. Hanging golden lanterns cast light in every corner. A banquet table is laden with silver plates filled with food and goblets brimming with wine.

"It's set for a victory feast," says Caesar. "We'll not disappoint Pompey—we'll take *our* dinner here."

Caesar reclines on a divan beside the table, and you pull up a campstool. You wolf down a roasted chicken leg and a handful of grapes. When you glance up, you notice a writing desk strewn with parchments and scrolls. Curiosity gets the better of you. You clean your fingers, rise from the table, and inspect the contents of the desk.

You cannot believe what you're reading! These are all Pompey's personal papers and correspondence!

"Caesar!" you cry. "Look what I've found!" You hand him one of the parchments. Caesar reads it slowly, then holds the corner up to the candle in front of him. Instantly, the document catches fire and goes up in smoke.

“But why?” you ask.

“I have defeated Pompey, dined on his food, and drunk his wine. I have no need to read his letters.” He drains his cup and says, “Destroy them all!”

You take the scrolls and parchments outside and burn them in one of the campfires. As you watch them turn to ashes you wonder what secrets they might have contained.

“Hail, Caesar,” a voice calls, and a battle-grimed centurion appears.

“What news do you bring of the battle?” Caesar asks.

“The last of Pompey’s armies are cut off from all escape. They are without food or water. It is only a matter of hours before they surrender.”

“And Pompey?” you ask, thinking of the incredible feast he left behind. “What has happened to Pompey?”

“It’s reported that he tore the insignia of command from his clothing and fled with some of his army. He is nowhere to be seen!”

“My thanks,” Caesar says. “To all of you.”

You look at Caesar in wonder. His sword lies at the foot of Pompey’s abandoned banquet table. Little more than a year has passed since Caesar crossed the Rubicon, yet now the Roman world and Empire are his!

It’s time to move ahead. Caesar isn’t ready to return to Rome, and it could be quite awhile before he does. You can catch up with him at a future date when he’s likely to be wearing the sword.



**Jump to Rome one year later. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump to Rome two years later. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump to Rome four years later. [Click here.](#)**



It's the morning of March 15, 44 B.C. With great haste you make your way through the streets and alleyways until you reach the Forum. There just outside the Curia where the Senate convenes, stands Brutus. But he's not alone. Cassius—the ring-leader himself—is there also, and so is an armed guard who is twice the size of either man!

Brutus and Cassius are deep in conversation. Maybe Brutus still isn't convinced. You wish you could hear what they're saying!

Your heart is pounding with impatience. One purple-striped tunic after another, senators are filing into the Curia. And all you can do is wait.

Now—at last—the two men seem to have finished speaking. Brutus nods and starts inside. Your stomach sinks as you see his hand rest upon the handle of a dagger, half hidden beneath his toga! *Where is Caesar?* you wonder.



[Click here.](#)





**Y**ou've never been inside the Curia before. The building is filled with circular rows of wooden seats and stone columns. But you're not here to admire the setting.

A man is speaking to Caesar. "Recall my brother from exile, Caesar. I implore you!"

Caesar replies, "I cannot do that, Tillius Cimber."

"Reconsider his plea, Caesar," another man insists.

"My patience grows thin, Casca," says Caesar.

You only half listen to the argument as the man named Casca and other senators inch closer to Caesar. You glance about and see Brutus, Cassius, and Trebonius among them. More than a few hold their hands to one side.

Suddenly you see Casca drawing a dagger from under his toga. Your heart is thumping so hard you think you're going to burst!

At that very moment, Cassius' guard seizes you and throws you outside! "And stay out!" he cries. "You don't belong here!"

You land with a thud on the marble step.

You've got to get back inside—you can't change what's going to happen, but you must find out if Caesar is armed with his sword.

You can wait until the guard isn't looking and try to sneak inside again. Or you can try to find a way to reenter immediately.





Hide just outside the Senate and wait.  
**[Click here.](#)**



Find some way to reenter the Senate now.  
**[Click here.](#)**



It's the evening of March 14, 44 B.C. Caesar is entertaining at a banquet in his *domus*. Your friend Silvius' family has been invited. As his father's assistant, you've been invited, too.

Caesar greets you warmly and remarks, "Why, it's been ages—and you haven't grown an inch since I last saw you!"

"I . . . I come from a small family," you say quickly.

"Doesn't Caesar see you every day when you come to work?" Silvius whispers when the two of you have entered the peristyle.

"Well . . . I wouldn't exactly say *every day*," you answer to his curious expression.

"Dinner is ready," says a servant, much to your relief. These time jumps aren't easy to explain!

You recline lengthwise, as is the Roman custom, on a silk divan, although you find it difficult to eat while propping yourself on one elbow. The food is plentiful, but you feel an air of uneasiness hovering over the room.

Caesar has been discussing plans for his Parthian campaign. He's due to depart within four days. One guest says, "Tell me, Caesar, many times you have witnessed death in battle. Which kind is best?"

All eyes are on your host, who replies without hesitation. "A swift one, Marc Antony," he says.

Suddenly there's a crashing sound. The noise makes you lose your elbow balance. The food slides off your plate and you almost

wind up on the floor.

A servant enters and says, “A picture has fallen. It is an ill omen.”

“Why do you say that?” asks Caesar.

“It is the portrait of one of your ancestors,” the servant explains. “It is a warning.”

A momentary hush falls over the room.

“I shall have good news tomorrow when I return from the Senate,” says Caesar, ignoring the servant’s remarks.

Calpurnia, Caesar’s wife, nervously spills her wine and says, “My husband, I beg you to stay home tomorrow. I have had such terrible dreams—they are filled with dread!”

You can see that she’s truly upset. Seeing a chance to subtly warn her husband about the plot you overheard, you say, “I, too, have had nightmares, Caesar. I’ve dreamed that something awful will happen on the ides of March.”

But Caesar takes more wine and says, “Dreams are superstitious nonsense. Like the soothsayer’s warning.”

“What warning is that?” you ask.

“I was told to beware the ides of March. But it is past midnight. The ides have come, and no ill has befallen me.” He laughs, and a few of the guests nervously join in.

Calpurnia doesn’t laugh. “The ides have come, my husband,” she says, “but they have not passed.”

It’s late, and Caesar’s face looks weary as he drains his cup. He forces a smile. “Well, at least no one has poisoned my wine,” he jokes to one friend.

This time nobody laughs. But one of Caesar’s friends warns, “You should not attend the Senate unarmed tomorrow.”

Caesar doesn’t reply.

You know you cannot change history. But if you go to the Senate in the morning, you can find out if Caesar takes his friend’s advice and carries the sword. You’re also curious to see if Brutus has joined the conspirators after all. He had seemed so opposed to the plot.



Whatever you decide to do, you know it's best to act now!



**Follow Caesar in the morning. [Click here.](#)**



**Follow Brutus in the morning. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou're in Rome. It's a glorious day in October 46 B.C.—the day of Caesar's triumphant return from Thapsus, Africa. The limestone temples and state buildings of the Forum glisten in the bright sunlight. Columns and statues have been draped with garlands of brightly colored flowers.

With each turn you're jostled by the sea of people that crowds along the Via Sacra. Rather than fight them, you allow yourself to be swept along in their flow until you find yourself beside a large statue. You climb its base, and from your vantage point you can see clearly over the teeming heads in front of you.

"They're coming!" someone cries, and immediately the crowd roars. You see a corps of orange-plumed, helmeted trumpeters appear through the arch at the entrance to the Forum. Their fanfare pierces the crisp autumn air.

"Look—here come the prisoners!" shouts a boy.

A band of men, their hands in chains, is led past a screaming group of children, who rush forward and pelt them with rotten tomatoes. Behind the prisoners, borne atop a wooden platform, is a single, proud figure. With his head erect, he faces head-on the taunts and insults of his captors. It's Vercingetorix! His skin is pale, as if he hasn't seen the light of day in years.

Poor man, you think. A warrior king as brave as Vercingetorix deserves better!

Wagons, loaded with trophies and spoils and crowned with the legions' standards, rumble by, straining under the weight of their load.



“Caesar has certainly refilled the treasury!” says an onlooker as he munches on a piece of bread.

Now the crowd’s cheers swell. An honor guard of red-tunicked, olive-leaf-crowned men marches in strict step. Above them you can just make out the lone figure—it’s Caesar!

The crowd erupts as one voice. “Hail, Caesar!”

He rides past you. You can see him clearly now. His golden two-wheeled chariot is pulled by four white stallions. He wears a gold and purple robe. Along the path of his chariot the crowd strews flower petals.

You climb down from your perch and follow.

“I’ve never seen anything like this!” you call out to a girl your age as you try to make yourself heard above the roar of the people.

“Oh, this is just the beginning!” she yells back at the top of her voice. “It’s going to continue for many more days—a triumph for each of his victorious campaigns, in Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Pharsalus. Are you staying for the banquet in the Forum?”

“A banquet—here?” you ask.

“Yes!” she answers. “The biggest banquet that Rome has ever seen! More than twenty thousand people are invited!”

A banquet for twenty thousand people would be quite a sight! you think. But it won’t help you on your mission.

You know that Caesar has been elected dictator for ten years. And you know he isn’t wearing his sword in the procession. Surely on the occasion of his triumph, nobody’s going to try and kill him. In that case, maybe it’s a good idea to jump ahead in time to March of 44 B.C. That way you can see if Caesar is fearful of a plot to kill him. If he is, he’ll probably be wearing his sword.



[Click here.](#)



**Y**ou wait until Brutus, Cassius, and his guard have entered the Curia. You've been keeping an eye out for Caesar, but he hasn't arrived yet.

You see Cassius and another man come out of the Curia. You edge closer and hear Cassius say, "Decimus, the success of our plan depends on you. You *must* persuade him!"

The other man nods and says, "Caesar will come. I will see to that!" He hurries off down the street while Cassius reenters the Curia.

An hour passes and then a litter stops before the Curia, and Caesar descends. A man rushes forward and hands Caesar a note. But Caesar is being jostled by the crowd, and he enters the Curia with the note still folded, unread.

You look around for the man who gave Caesar the note, but he's been swallowed by the swarms of people. You recognize Marc Antony as he makes his way to the entrance. You know he's Caesar's closest friend. Why doesn't *he* do something? you ask yourself in frustration.

But then you see the answer. Trebonius, one of the conspirators you heard plotting on that first night, blocks Antony's way. "Marc Antony," he says, "I have news of the utmost importance!"

You can't stand this! When Trebonius' back is turned, you sneak past him. You've got to enter the Curia!



**Click here.**



It is March 20, 44 B.C. You stand to one side of the Via Sacra as the funeral procession passes by. At its head, an actor wears Caesar's death mask. The ivory bier carrying the fallen leader is borne on a simple handbarrow.

The Forum is so mobbed that you can hardly breathe. People have come from far and wide to mourn Caesar.

"He's left his gardens as a public park!" you hear an old man tell a group gathered around him.

"And three hundred *sesterces* to every citizen of Rome!" says another next to him.

"Death to the conspirators!" cries a young dark-haired man. "Burn their houses!"

Only when Marc Antony mounts the *rostrum* to deliver his eulogy does silence spread throughout the crowd. But when he raises Caesar's torn and bloodstained robe, pandemonium erupts. Loud, wild cries incite the mourners as wood is gathered and the pyre is set ablaze.

But the pyre isn't enough to satisfy the mob. Veterans throw their weapons on the fire. Actors tear off their costumes and toss them to the flames. Women add their jewels, musicians their instruments, beggars their rags. You take your pouch of *sesterces* and hurl it into the inferno as your personal farewell.

Throughout the night you stay by the smoldering pyre. You join with the Jews who keep vigil and intone their funeral chants.

"He allowed us to worship as we pleased," one man explains to



you as he rocks back and forth in mournful prayer.

At dawn, when the last embers are no more than ashes, you stretch your weary limbs.

“He was warned to beware the ides,” says a voice from behind a column.

“Who are you?” you ask, turning.

“Spurinna by name. Soothsayer by profession. I foresaw what has come to pass.”

“Can you tell what will happen now?” you ask.

“Terror will reign until Octavian brings peace,” says Spurinna.

“And will this Octavian carry Caesar’s sword?” you say.

“Why not ask him yourself?” answers Spurinna.

Does the soothsayer know that you can do this? Or is it just a fortune-teller’s riddle?

Whichever, it’s a sound idea. When Spurinna has gone, you find a spot and jump.



**Go to 29 B.C. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou pick yourself up from the steps and brush off your tunic. At that moment, another litter arrives in front of the Curia, and a very old senator alights. Quickly you approach him.

“Sir, excuse me, but I need your help! It’s a matter of life and death!” You hope the man isn’t one of the conspirators, but he looks too frail to even raise his voice, let alone a dagger.

“Eh?” he says. “Speak up, youngster! I don’t hear the way I used to!”

“I have to get inside the Senate. I must see Caesar,” you say with your mouth up against his ear. You don’t dare shout it or your own life will be worthless!

“What’s that again? Caesar? He’s not here today. I saw him only two hours ago at his house. He wasn’t feeling well.”

“He’s inside, I tell you! And you’ve got to help me get in there immediately!”

“Young one, I can’t do *anything* immediately! Why don’t you just go into the Senate yourself?”

“Because—” But it will sound very odd to admit that you were thrown out. Thinking fast, you say, “Look, I’ll go in with you, all right?” Maybe you can walk crouched down behind the old man and hide in his shadow.

“Whatever you like,” the senator says, “but we’d best get started now, then. Otherwise the Senate will be through with its business for the day.”

His words are spoken lightly, but the very innocence of his statement makes you tremble with fear.



**Hurry, [click here.](#)**



**Y**ou're in Rome in the summer of 29 B.C. The Via Sacra is lined with people calling, "Hail, Caesar!" as a splendid procession parades through the arch and into the Forum.

You've never seen this man before. "Why do they call him by Julius Caesar's name?" you ask the woman standing next to you.

"Not *Julius* Caesar," she replies. "That's his grandnephew and our emperor, Octavian. He, too, is a Caesar."

Emperor! you think. But Caesar's killers *feared* a monarchy!

"Octavian has at last come home to restore peace," the woman continues. "The doors to the Temple of Janus are shut—after twenty years of civil war! Octavian has vowed to complete the building and government reforms begun by his uncle."

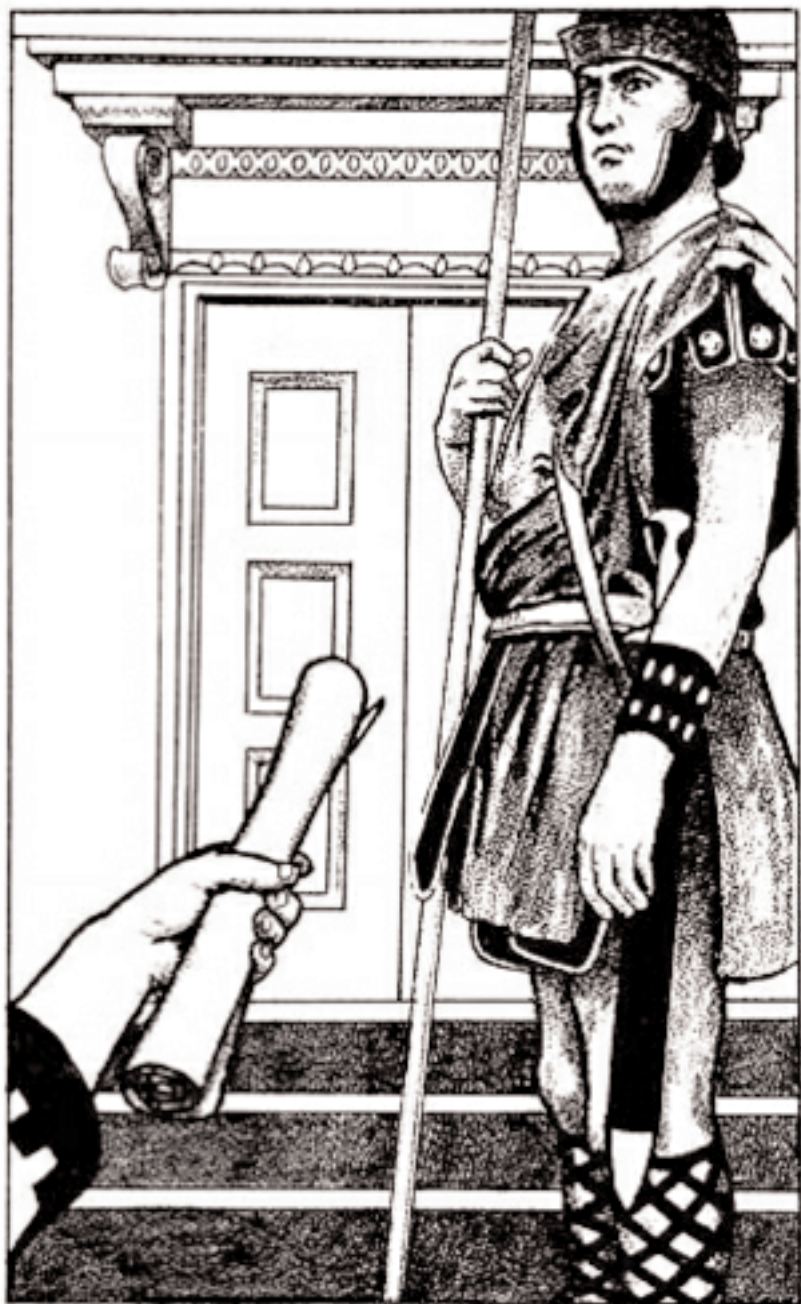
If this is Caesar's grandnephew, maybe he knows about Caesar's sword!

You go to Octavian's *domus*, a palace far more humble than his predecessor's. You give your passport diploma—the one Caesar gave you—to a guard, and moments later you're ushered before Octavian.

He looks nothing like the tall, elegant Caesar whose name he bears. Octavian's complexion is pale, his sandy hair is thin and dull, and his weak limbs protrude awkwardly from a simple homespun tunic. You notice that he's barefoot.

Nonetheless, he is Rome's leader, so respectfully you say, "Hail, Caesar."

He returns your scrolled passport and smiles warmly. "I am



happy to speak with any of my subjects—especially one whose diploma bears my uncle’s seal. You’re too young to have known him, so I assume this belonged to a member of your family. Did your father serve under Caesar?”

“Well . . . not exactly,” you say. “It’s a very long story. . . .”

“I’m sorry. It’s just that I was still a youngster—though older than you—when my uncle was slain. I am always eager to learn more of him. Forgive me. What can I do for you?”

You tell him what you’re looking for.

“The sword is in my possession,” says Octavian. “When I defeated my uncle’s enemies at Philippi, I pledged to erect a temple to Mars Ultor—the Avenger—and dedicate it to Caesar. His sword shall rest inside. Despite his human failings, my uncle brought untold glories to Rome. His sword will serve as an everlasting symbol of his greatness.”

So you know where the sword is *now*. And you know where the sword *will be*. However, your mission is to discover its *final* destiny. For this you’ll have to jump ahead to the future, to a time *after* Octavian has placed the sword in the Temple of Mars Ultor.

You tuck your diploma into your tunic, thank the emperor, and continue on your mission.



**Jump ahead to A.D. 37. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump ahead to A.D. 59. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou're looking up to see whether the guard is at the entrance when you hear horrible screams from inside the Senate. Men run from the Curia, their hands clutching red-tipped daggers, their togas streaked with blood! You don't care *who* sees you now—you rush up the steps into the building.

There, at the foot of Pompey's statue, lies Caesar. You see his many wounds and slowly realize that nothing could have saved him; there were too many against him.

A lone senator remains seated, his head buried in his hands. You go to him; perhaps you can find a way to comfort each other.

"What a sorry day for Rome," he says in a choked voice. "The world shall know none so great as Caesar."

You are deeply saddened. Still, despite a grieving heart, you must remember your mission. Slowly you approach the fallen leader and look in vain for his sword. You don't see it anywhere.

"What seek you?" the senator asks.

"Caesar's sword," you say. "It's not here."

"No," he says, tears forming in his eyes. "The cowards cut down an unarmed man. He could not defend himself even had his eyes not met those of Marcus Brutus."

You ask him to explain.

"At first Caesar tried resisting his assailants. But when he saw Brutus raise his dagger, the will to live left him. 'You, too, my son?' he asked as Brutus struck. He covered his face—I think to shield his eyes from those of the man he held most dear."



Your spirit is heavy as you leave the Curia. Outside, chaos rules. People flee in all directions. Some scream in terror; others sob openly in each other's arms. Rioting and looting are rampant. A reign of terror has begun.

You feel a stronger sense of purpose, now. You *must* find Caesar's sword!

But will it burn with him on the funeral pyre? Or will it be handed down to Caesar's successor? You have to learn the answer!



**Stay for Caesar's funeral. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump to Caesar's successor. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou're in front of the Senate Curia in A.D. 37. Guards stand three-deep outside.

"It's because the emperor's mad," says a wine merchant. "He trusts no one anymore."

" 'Tis true he's mad—but he has reason to fear for his life," adds a cobbler who is repairing sandals next to the wine shop.

"Why is that?" you ask.

"Well, he has people put to death for no reason. I'm glad *I* don't make his *caligula*—if a shoe's too tight, the cobbler's dead!" He and the wine merchant roar with laughter.

"Caligula?" you ask.

"It means little boots. The emperor wore them in Germany when he was a child, so the soldiers nicknamed him Caligula. His real name is Gaius Caesar Germanicus."

Gaius Caesar! you think. He's a descendant of Julius Caesar! You'd like to meet this "Little Boots." You approach the Curia. A tall guard bars your way.

"I have a passport to enter anywhere," you say, producing your diploma.

The guard reads it and spits. "It isn't valid—it's from Julius Caesar's time! Let's hear what the emperor has to say about this!"

Well, it's one way to meet him!

You're dragged into the Curia, where a circle of senators surrounds a pale, skinny man with hollow eyes and an ugly expression. He is seated high upon a horse and is nibbling from a handful of figs.

“So you all fear my horse! Not one of you dares to touch him! Afraid he’ll bite your head off? *I* can have it *cut* off!”

The guard pulls you over. The horse whinnies, and the senators jump back. But you can see that the horse is just yawning. You reach up and pat his muzzle.

The horse rubs his nose against your palm and becomes quiet.

“Well, well,” says the rider, “at least one person in the Empire likes Incitatus!” To you he says, “And he seems to like you.”

Caligula tosses you a fig. “Here—see if he’s hungry. If he eats, I may let you live!” *His* laugh is worse than the horse’s whinny!

Luckily for you, the horse gobbles up the fruit.

“Wonderful,” says the emperor. “You’ll stay for dinner.” He claps his hands. “Get out, all of you!” he orders the senators. “And don’t come back until I send for you!”

He dismounts. You’d like to ride the horse, but Caligula warns, “No one in Rome sits or stands higher than I—remember that!”

You remember all through dinner at his palace, even when it requires you to lie on the floor—just to stay lower than the emperor, who sits *under* his horse!

Before dessert is served, Caligula says, “I’ll share a secret with you, friend. You’ll be the first to know.” Lowering his voice, he whispers, “I plan to make Incitatus a *consul*—now what do you think of that?”

*What do you think?* That the rumors are true—Caligula *is* mad! A nervous giggle escapes your lips.

“Mock the emperor, will you?” he cries. “Guards! Come immediately! We have a giggler in our midst! To prison! And then to death!”

Caligula’s shrieking laughter echoes in your ears as you’re hauled off to a dark, damp cell. When the guards are gone, jump anywhere—as long as it’s away from here!



[Click here.](#)



**Y**ou're in the center of Rome in A.D. 59. You've decided that the best way to learn about Caesar's sword is to see if there are any records of it in books of the time. You go to the public library, which was built by Julius Caesar. You hope that here you will find the answer you seek.

Inside the vast marble rooms are countless shelves stacked with parchment scrolls. You ask a librarian for volumes on Julius Caesar. "Over there," he says, "where Seneca is reading."

You approach the man, who has several scrolls unrolled before him. He looks up. "Well," he says, "it's nice to see young people visit the library. Such a wealth of information is to be found here. But I hope you aren't looking for *The Gallic Wars*, because I'm studying them just now."

You helped copy Caesar's notes for these volumes! you think proudly, fondly remembering tired, old Scriptus Sempronius.

"Actually, I'm looking for something more recent," you say. "I need to know what became of Caesar's sword—after the reign of Octavian."

"Well, youngster," says Seneca, "as the emperor Nero's tutor, I've made a special study of the house of Caesar. In A.D. 2, Octavian dedicated the Temple of Mars Ultor and placed Caesar's sword inside. That's where it is now. But," he says, scratching his chin, "one would need the ability to travel forward in time to know its future fate."

Seneca doesn't know it, but you can do exactly that! You say



good-bye to the old tutor and leave him to his scrolls.

Maybe you should jump to a year when the sword is no longer in the Temple of Mars. That way you can work your way backward till you find the answer.



**Jump ahead one year. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump ahead five years. [Click here.](#)**



**Jump to the fifth century A.D. [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou've landed in a crowded square. In the distance you can see the Augustan Forum. It's in ruins, but at least you know you're in Rome.

The cornerstone of a building reads Piazza Venezia. Thousands of Italians are jammed together, facing the balcony of a huge *palazzo* where a bald-headed man in uniform is making a speech. "I will restore the Empire to its former glory!" he cries. "I will bring peace to the people of Italy!"

The crowd cheers, but you've heard all this before, from the leaders of ancient Rome.

"To Hitler and the Axis Pact, hail!" the man cries feverishly.

The mob shouts as one, "Hail, *Il Duce!*"

You break into a cold sweat. That man is Mussolini! No wonder you see so many people in black shirts—the Blackshirts are Mussolini's stong-armed Fascists!

Just then, one of the Blackshirts spots you. "Well, well," he says. "A tunic and sandals—in 1936? So you think *Il Duce* wants to be emperor? You'll see what happens to Romans who make fun of *Mussolini!* They go straight to Regina Coeli Prison!"

Before you can explain—not that he'd believe you, anyway—you're hauled off to an empty cell inside the jail.

"I'll be back to interrogate you later," the Blackshirt says. "You're old enough to be a member of the Partisan Resistance—and if you're one of them, you'll hang!"



As soon as the Blackshirt is gone, **click here.**



**Y**ou've jumped to A.D. 410. Rome is in ruins. What hasn't been burned has been stripped of all its former splendor.

You wander through the crumbled streets, where filthy children beg amid the rubble. Small fires are built in the open alleyways, and rotting food lies strewn in the gutters.

You follow the path to the Forum. An eeriness whistles on the winds at the spot where the Caesars ruled and fell.

Suddenly you see a huge man dressed in skins and leather. His dirty hair is long and blond, and his blue eyes bore into you.

"What are you doing here?" he bellows.

"I—I was v-visiting," you stammer. "W-what has h-happened to Rome?"

"The same thing that will happen to you!" he roars.

You're speechless and frozen with fear.

"So," he cries, "not afraid of Alaric, king of the Visigoths? I'll change that!"

He draws his sword. *That* moves you!



**Run from Alaric! [Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou've landed on a strange yet familiar site. You wonder if you've been here before.

"What is this place?" you ask a girl standing nearby.

"It's the Augustan Forum," she answers, showing you a map.

"But where's the Temple of Mars Ultor?" you ask, squinting in the sunlight at the ruins of three white marble columns.

"You're standing in front of what's left of it," the girl tells you.

She's wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers. You blink as she focuses her camera and says, "Smile! I *have* to snap you in that great costume!"

On the streets surrounding the Forum, cars and motorcycles buzz past. Crowds stop to stare at you. They're speaking Italian, French, Romanian, and Spanish—but all sound familiar to your ears. No wonder—they're based on Latin, the language of ancient Rome!

You hear a tremendous rumbling, and the ground beneath you shakes. But it's not an earthquake—it's a subway! You've jumped to present-day Rome!

The girl asks, "Have you seen the Imperial Forum, yet? There are some terrific ruins there!" She offers you her guidebook.

"Thanks," you say, "but I've been around the ancient city." And it's time to get back there, you think. Find a deserted spot—and jump.



**Click here.**





It's one year later, A.D. 60. All of the businesses in Rome are closed, and masses of people seem to be heading in the same direction. This is puzzling, but you spot large notices posted all around. You stop to read one, and discover that Nero's Olympic-style games, the *Neronia*, are being held at the enormous Circus Maximus. You join the crowd, which leads you there.

Once inside the stadium, you find an excellent spot, just under the imperial box with the seats of honor.

"I hope there won't be much bloodshed," you say to the man on the cushion beside you.

"Oh, Nero's changed that," he says. "No more fights to the death. It's all in fun."

The spectators—at least 300,000 of them!—begin to cheer. "Look!" says the man. "There's the emperor now!"

He's chubby and his cheeks are flushed from the sun. He waves to the people and gives a signal. A fanfare of trumpets sounds, and the athletes follow the ceremonial procession into the arena.

"The first race will be between chariots drawn by four horses," the man beside you says.

You peer down at the horses. Their tails are tightly knotted. The charioteers wear helmets, and their tunics match their horses' ribbons. "Those are the colors of the groups that sponsor them," says your companion.

Nero stands and nods to the crowd. He holds an ivory baton with

a carved eagle at its top. On his head is a wreath of golden leaves.

He tosses his white napkin as a signal, and the chariots zoom off down the vast length of the field. You wonder how the riders can see with so much dust flying up around them.

Suddenly one of the chariots goes crashing into the turning post! A scream—then a hush—soars through the stands.

Nero rises again and calls, “We will need a substitute charioteer for the next race. Who will have the honor?”

A buzzing mosquito bites your ear. You raise your arm to swat it and hear the emperor’s voice cry, “Excellent! That youngster down there with the raised hand!”

Oh, no! Is this really happening? It is, and more. Nero claps his hands and announces, “It shall be a double honor! *I* shall race against our brave young charioteer!”

Should you accept or refuse? Well, you reason, maybe after the race you can speak with Nero and ask him about Caesar’s sword. If you win, perhaps he’ll tell you. But what if you lose? Is it better to look for a deserted spot and jump directly to the Augustan Forum, where Octavian said he would build the Temple of Mars and place the sword?



**Stay and race against Nero. [Click here.](#)**



**Find a place and jump to the Augustan Forum. [Click here.](#)**



**T**he Visigoth chases you through the ruins, past the Palatine Hill where once stood the emperors' stately palaces, and on through the Colosseum, which seems to have fared better than most of its ancient neighbors.

Ghosts of the Empire's glory guide you as you lead Alaric back around the Forum where lone columns rise roofless to the sky.

The Visigoth is close behind as you head toward the Augustan Forum—maybe you can escape from him if you can reach the Temple of Mars. It'll be dark enough inside to jump.

But where is it? Only three broken columns stand on the site! There's nothing else—certainly no sword!

Did the pillaging Visigoths steal Caesar's sword? Or did it disappear from the Temple earlier?

You see a marble slab that's small enough to move, but big enough to hurt. You shove it down the hill. Alaric stumbles over it. He's not looking. Now's your chance!



**Click here.**





**T**he four horses' reins are wound tightly about your waist. You place your feet on the narrow step in the two-wheeled chariot. You still can't believe you're doing this—racing against Nero—but his presiding consul gives the signal, the starting gates open, and you're off!

The horses hurtle you down the arena's length to the end column. You're sure you'll crash into it, but somehow the chariot makes the turn and shoots back to the opposite end.

Your heart in your throat, you race back and forth seven times against the background roar of the cheering crowd. It's neck-and-neck until the very last lap when Nero surges across the finish line and wins by half a chariot length.

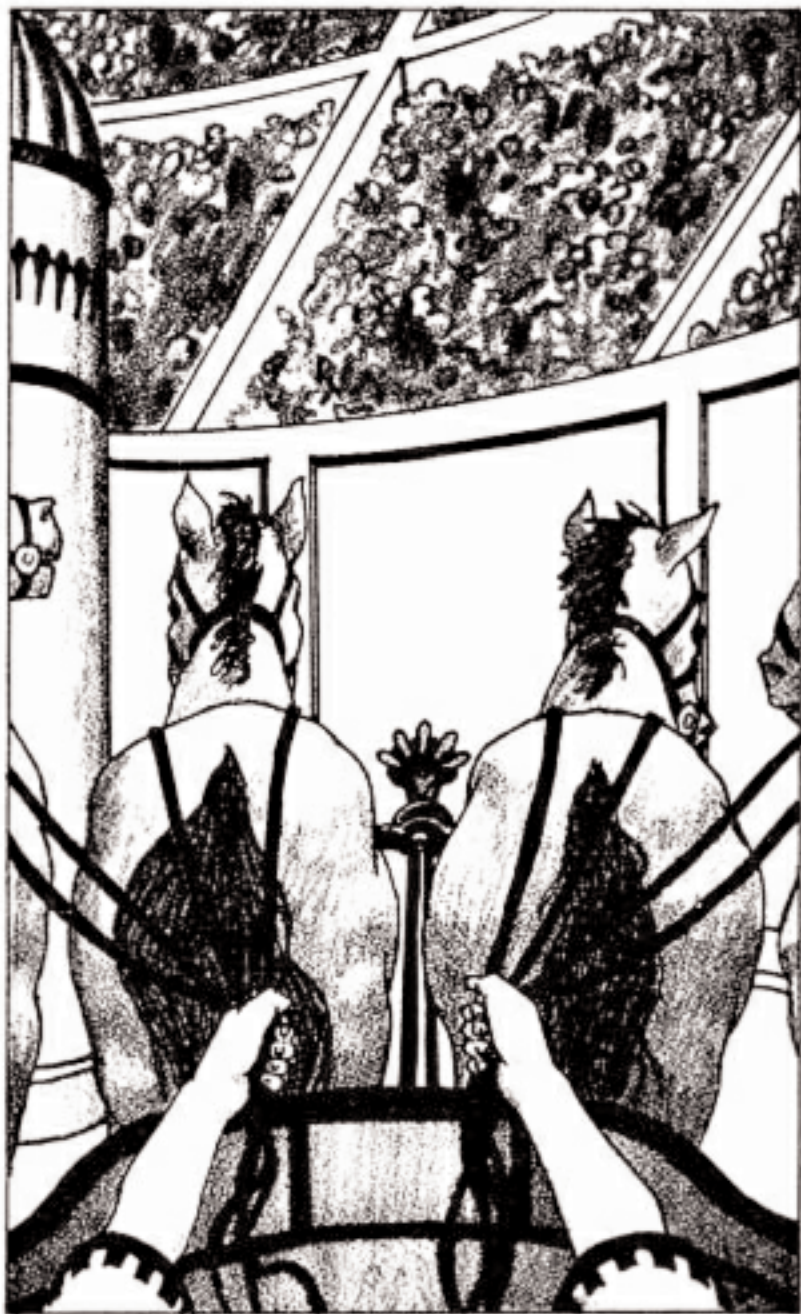
You're totally exhausted, but the competition seems to have exhilarated the emperor.

"You're a good sport," he says. "Come, be my guest at the palace for the celebration and recital!"

"Recital?" you ask.

"Of course. I'm a trained musician as well as an accomplished athlete. Come—I'll show you my trophies from the Athens games!"

Once you arrive at Nero's magnificent *domus*, you're shown his impressive collection of victor's cups and medals. But the emperor confides, "My deepest wish is to become a great musician. I often travel and give concerts to my subjects." He plucks a pear from a silver fruit platter.



“Pears cleanse the palate,” he explains. “Now you’ll have to excuse me while I vocalize for my recital.” He lies flat on his back, and a servant places a heavy iron weight across his chest. “It’s for breath control,” he says.

The other guests have arrived and you join them while Nero warms up.

“He’s not in voice,” says the man you recognize as Seneca. “I may be his tutor, but I take no credit or blame for his singing!”

Another guest says, “Well, Seneca, you must admit he’s done wonders for Rome. The city’s never been safer, there’s peace on our borders, and just look at the prosperity!”

You look—Nero’s *domus* is filled with so much gold, silver, and jewels that it seems more like the imperial treasury than the imperial palace! The dinner tables are set with silver platters of ostrich wings, flamingo tongues, and songbird meat.

Finally, Nero enters and claps his hands. As if by magic, flower petals float down from the ceiling and tiny gifts are showered upon the guests!

He clears his throat for silence. He plucks a few strings on the lyre and begins. His voice is thin and reedy, but everyone applauds.

“Nero can’t sing,” observes one guest whose black hair is *painted* on his head, “but at least he gives us bread and circuses.”

Nero stops. “Someone *speaks* while the emperor *performs*?” he says, reddening. “Away with the offender—he’s unworthy of my art!”

“It’s wise to remember that he had his own mother put to death last year,” whispers a woman.

Nero resumes his singing. But he’s straining, and his anger doesn’t help. When he hits a high note, you close your eyes and cringe. The note cracks—and your silver dish of goose liver falls to the onyx floor!

Nero’s face is purple with rage. He points a chubby finger and cries, “I’ve had enough insults! Whoever did that shall hang!”

Before he sees your face, you turn and run down the marble halls. There's a dark doorway. Run inside and jump!



**Click here.**



**Y**ou're at the Augustan Forum in Rome. It's the evening of July 18, A.D. 64, and you're looking for the Temple of Mars Ultor.

Suddenly you hear shouts. "Fire! Fire!" You turn, and in the distance you see flames spreading everywhere! You follow a group of people to the street.

"The city will crumble!" cries a man. "Our houses will be destroyed!"

"We'll be ruined—there's not enough water in the Tiber to save us!" wails another man, hurrying off in the direction of the blaze.

Rumors spread as quickly as the flames.

"Nero's fled to Antium," a woman tells you as she rushes past with a bucket of water.

"No—our bloated emperor watches from the Tower of Maecenas," says an old man pushing a wheelbarrow.

You ask him, "Why do you speak this way of the emperor?"

"Because," he says, "Nero ordered the fire! I'd wager *he's* safe, though!"

You hurry back to the Augustan Forum. It isn't burning. Neither is the Temple of Mars.

You enter the marble building and go straight to the altar in search of Caesar's sword.

*It isn't there!* What's happened to it? Perhaps Nero has removed it for safekeeping. But where is Nero? You'd better find



him—he must know the answer!



**Look for Nero on the Palatine Hill.**

**[Click here.](#)**



**Look for Nero in the Tower of Maecenas.**

**[Click here.](#)**



**Y**ou and countless volunteers requisition food for the victims and erect tents in the Field of Mars, which remains untouched by the fire.

“Tell my guards to open all public buildings still standing,” says Nero. “Meanwhile, I shall accommodate the homeless in my own imperial gardens.”

You hurry off, and soon you’re comforting entire families whose tenement dwellings fell at the first spark.

When you return to Nero’s gardens, you help serve food and water to the hundreds of victims seeking shelter there.

“I’ll rebuild the city,” Nero says when the last victims have been fed. “The old buildings were firetraps. Ugly, too. I shall erect a modern city of marble—and I’ll rename it Neropolis.” He sighs. “And I’ll give a gala concert to mark the occasion.” He reaches into his tunic and brings forth a coin bearing his image.

“Here,” he says. “You’ve been a great help.”

You thank him, but the name of Caesar on the coin only reminds you of your mission. The fire has raged for nine days. The worst is over. But you still don’t know what has happened to Caesar’s sword.



**Click here.**



**Y**ou're at the base of the Tower of Maecenas. You've heard so many rumors about Nero's having started the fire that you half expect to look up and see him playing on the lyre—while the city turns to ashes!

You come upon a bedraggled mother with her infant child. Both look hungry. "Have you seen the emperor?" you ask.

"I wouldn't know him if he passed me in the street," she says. "I know he's fat and that he sings, but he doesn't bother with poor people like us."

You continue along until you see a man drawing water from a well. "Have you seen Nero?" you ask.

"I heard he lit a torch to the city and then fled to Antium," he says. "It's likely, if there's an audience there to hear him play."

A woman nearby says, "Or maybe he's gone to Naples—they applaud his voice there."

You're exhausted. You lean against a wooden door. It feels hot. Suddenly it collapses, and fire is raging all around you. Jump quickly!



**Click here.**



**Y**ou watch from the Palatine Hill along with scores of Romans as each of the city's tenements and markets is engulfed by a sea of flames.

Soon the fire starts to spread toward the imperial palaces. The air is choked with ashes, leaving your face and clothes covered with soot.

"Nero, Nero! The Palatine is in danger!" cries a soldier to the potbellied man in torn purple robes beside you.

"Evacuate the area!" Nero bellows. "We are unsafe here!"

You stay close to Nero as the crowd starts to descend the hill. Halfway down you see a second soldier pushing through the crowd. As he approaches he calls, "Nero! One of the *Crestiani* has confessed to setting the fire—we only had to torture him for three hours before he spoke!"

"*Crestiani*?" you say.

"Yes," Nero answers. "The religious sect. And there are some in Rome who say that *I* ordered the fire! *I* am blameless, you know."

You don't know, so you say nothing.

You continue to move farther away from the Palatine Hill. As you reach a corner, two buildings come crashing to the ground. The heat is unbearable! All around you, people are fleeing with as many of their belongings as they can carry.

Bucket brigades snake through the streets down to the banks of the Tiber, but efforts are in vain. All Rome seems doomed by the orange-red glow against the darkening sky.



“Nero needs volunteers!” cry soldiers. One of them points at you. “Young or old, we can use your help, too!”

You’d like to lend a hand. You’d also like to find Caesar’s sword. You know it’s missing from the Temple of Mars, but where can it be?



Stay and help put out the fire. [Click here.](#)



Search for Caesar’s sword. [Click here.](#)



**Y**ou know from the arches, columns, and ruins on all sides below that You're atop the Palatine Hill.

But the hill isn't burning, and there are no palaces anywhere. Instead, there's a huge complex of modern buildings made of brick and plate glass.

You open a massive carved oak door and go inside. Telephones are ringing, and people carrying clipboards rush past. Everyone seems to be in a hurry. A woman dressed in embroidered Egyptian gold cloth and wearing an elaborate jeweled collar stands beside a vending machine and sips a soft drink. Someone yells, "Hi there, Cleo!" and she turns, the many black braids of her wig swinging with her head.

A man strolls by, tall, slim, and regal. He wears a purple toga, and a laurel wreath circles his bald head. "Hail, Caesar!" a girl wearing jeans and a sweatshirt greets him. They both laugh.

Then she sees you. "Why aren't you in makeup?" she asks. "We're already two hours behind schedule!"

*Just where are you?*

You glance up at the sign over the door. The brass plate reads: Studio Palatino, Roma.

You're at a film studio—and they're shooting a movie about ancient Rome!

You could give these modern Romans a few pointers! you think,

smiling to yourself. But that would take time, and your mission awaits.



**Click here.**



**Y**ou return to the library in hope of finding Seneca. You think that he might now be able to tell you about Caesar's sword. But the librarian says, "Seneca's probably at his house. It didn't burn in the fire."

You ask his address and then go to the tutor's home. It's nowhere near Nero's palace.

Seneca greets you warmly and explains his distance from his former student. "I'm afraid I have fallen from favor," he says. "I criticized Nero's extravagances. It's true they now outweigh those of all his predecessors—but he didn't appreciate my candor."

"So he banished you from his palace?" you ask, amazed.

"He's done far worse," Seneca replies. "He's stripped the sacred temples of their treasures and melted down their images—all to pay for his excesses."

"And Caesar's sword—in the Temple of Mars?" you ask.

"One of the first to go."

"But why melt a sword of iron?" you wonder aloud. "Why not melt only precious silver and gold?"

"Caesar's sword was a symbol," Seneca explains. "Nero wants no symbol that pays homage to another. Only those made in his image remain." His eyes look past you toward the volumes on his own personal library shelves. "History tends to repeat itself, my child. Nero one day too shall fall."

So Caesar's sword was destroyed because it was a symbol! You have Seneca's answer. But you must travel back in time again to see

the sword for yourself before your mission is completed.

“Maybe people will learn from history instead of repeating it,” you say to Seneca.

“I hope you are right, my friend,” he replies. You hope so too as you bid him farewell and take your leave.



**Click here.**



**Y**ou're standing in front of the *rostrum* before the Temple of Mars Ultor. It's A.D. 2, and the Augustan Forum is overflowing with people who have come for the dedication ceremonies.

"Long live Caesar!" they cry. This time you know they mean Octavian. But when you hear shouts of "Hail, Augustus," you're confused.

"The Senate has conferred the name," a woman explains. "It means the great one, and he has proven to be that, indeed."

The emperor enters to deafening cheers. You raise your voice with the rest. Augustus mounts the steps until he's in full view of everyone in the packed square.

Physically, the frail, humble man has aged greatly. As on the day you first met him, he's dressed in homespun clothes. His skin has remained pale, and now his posture is stooped. The dampness in the air adds to the stiffness of his step. But his eyes are clear and alive as he raises his hands to silence the crowd.

He reads from a scroll. "Beloved subjects of Rome! You know that as a rule I abhor public spectacle. However, this occasion is an exception. Before the Battle of Philippi, in which Brutus and Cassius fell, I vowed that I would build a temple to Mars Ultor in memory of my uncle and adoptive father, Julius Caesar."

He pauses, and the people cheer.

"I also pledged," he continues, "to place the sword of Caesar inside the temple. This is the sword!"

He raises it for all to see. “This sword changed the face of history as Caesar changed the face of the Empire!”

While Augustus’ speech goes on, you notice a man and a small boy standing against one of the marble columns of the new Forum. You feel a chill as your eyes meet the boy’s—he looks exactly like your old friend Silvius!

This can’t be! You move closer to gain a better view. The boy’s father looks familiar, too. Maybe it’s just the excitement of the occasion, you think. But then you realize that the man has noticed you, too.

“Excuse me for staring,” says the man. “But you resemble someone I knew as a child. Have we met before? I am Silvius Lucius.”

“My name is Julius,” says the little boy.

You can’t believe it—*this is Silvius!* And little Julius is his son!

“My father worked in Caesar’s house as secretary,” the man explains. “And I have named my son after that great leader. In fact, I was present at Caesar’s *domus* on the night before he died.” Now, his eyes fill with tears.

You can’t tell him that you were there, too. You mumble an introduction using a different name, and together, the three of you listen to the rest of Augustus’ dedication.

“When the ceremony is over,” Silvius says, “I would very much like to visit the Temple of Mars. Will you come with us?”

You nod. “Yes, I’d like that.”

Finally Augustus descends the *rostrum* and enters the splendid temple. When he comes out, your eyes meet for an instant. But he doesn’t recognize you; you met too long ago.

With Silvius and his son, you make your way through the crowd and enter the building. A soft light filters between the white marble columns at the front and guides you to the simple altar. At last you’re standing before the sword.

*Caesar’s sword.* The moment seems to stop in time. You look at little Julius’ face. His eyes are wide with wonder. Without knowing why, you reach your hand out to touch the sword. Its meaning flows into your imagination.





Your journey is at an end; you have learned the fate of Caesar's sword.

The forces that were Rome's strength and the forces that destroyed her are both still at work today. You hope your world can learn from the lessons of the past.

**MISSION COMPLETED.**

# DATA FILE

Page 8: It's always better to live history first-hand.

**Page 11:** The course of history and the course of a stream can sometimes flow together.

Page 21: "Beware the ides of March."

Page 55: One who hesitates is not always lost.

Page 59: Time and tides wait for no man.

Page 71: Some say, “Too much is better than not enough.”

Page 74: Blood is thicker than water and stronger than fire.

Page 79: Others say, "All things in moderation."

Page 94: Don't believe everything you hear!

Page 99: “To thine own self be true,” said both Caesar *and* Shakespeare.

## About the Contributors

ROBIN STEVENSON, a former actress and singer, began writing at age ten. In addition to collaborating with her husband Bruce, she and co-author Tom Bade, with whom she shares two pseudonyms, have written *Places* and *Appearances* by “Robin St. Thomas,” and mystery novels *The Stone Guest* and *Not Quite Right* by “Stevenson Bade.” Robin is a member of Mystery Writers of America.

BRUCE STEVENSON graduated from Yale University and lived for many years in Rome where he began his career as a professional opera singer. Under the name Edgar Stivàn he has sung leading tenor roles with major companies in Europe, Canada, and the United States. Bruce and his wife Robin make their home in New York City, where together they collaborated on this book.

RICHARD HESCOX has had worldwide distribution of his paperback book covers and illustrations. His work includes such diverse fields as magazine illustration, advertising, record album covers, and production designs for films including *The Howling* and *A Trip To Tomorrow*. He has painted movie posters for *Swamp Thing*, *E.T.*, *The Dark Crystal*, and other features. Some of his fantasy work has been published in a portfolio entitled *A Fatal Beauty*. He illustrated Time Machine #1, *Secret of the Knights*.