

The Civil War: Part II (48-45 BC)

After Julius Caesar defeated Gnaeus Pompey in the decisive victory at Pharsalus, the conflict did not end, but actually escalated on many fronts. After Pharsalus, Caesar decided to spend some time in Egypt and secure the Roman position there. No doubt, his encounter with Cleopatra had a lot to do with this decision. This was not a simple man meets woman affair though. Cleopatra VII was in the middle of a fierce struggle for power with her brother, Ptolemy XIII, and her sister, Arsinoe. Caesar ordered his legions into the battle and led Cleopatra to victory and control over Egypt.

In the meantime, Pompeians in Rome, hearing the news from Pharsalus, marshaled troops to Africa in the hopes of engaging Caesar in a tired and worn down position.

In addition, the kingdom of Pontus again begins to cause problems as Pharnaces, Mithridates' son, looks to take advantage of the region's confusion and expand his empire. Caesar quickly moves in and defeats him so quickly (his troops actually engaged Pharnaces without his permission!) that Caesar mutters his now famous quote, "*Veni, vidi, vici.*"

With foreign turmoil seemingly at a stand-still, Caesar returns to Rome, where he has had tribunes and consuls looking after his interests. Now that the situation had escalated, Caesar could no longer rely on these men and had to make his decisions himself. He and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus are "elected" consuls for 46 BC and many other positions are created and filled to reward faithful followers of the Caesarians. Caesar also heavily taxes nearby towns and auctioned off his opponent's property to fill his war chest.

Now with money, fresh troops, and fresh supplies, Caesar sets out for Africa to deal with the Pompeian uprising in April of 46. Again, a convincing victory at Thapsus puts an end to the battle and two colonies of veterans are set up.

Finally, Caesar is able to concentrate on politics in Rome (well, almost...). In July he and Cleopatra head back to Rome and has the Senate confers upon him (he would have taken it otherwise) every power needed to govern Rome by himself for a very long time. Caesar is smart though, and declares publicly that he will restore the state back to the Republic everybody knows and loves. What he didn't tell people, but they soon figured out, was that he would run every election and offer every *consultum* of the Senate. With these two powers he dictated who held each position and what laws were passed. By this time, the *boni* (led by Cicero) were so tired of civil war that they just wanted stability at any cost.

To his credit, Caesar enacts many pieces of legislation that further the cause of the *mos maiorum* and enhances the lives of Romans from one end of the city to the other. Among his measures: he reduces the amount of people who receive free and reduced price grain, settles many of the urban plebs into Roman colonies, suspends the civil associations such as those led by the infamous Milo and Clodius, and finally, refigures the Roman calendar closely to the one that we know today.

But still, one more battle is at hand. After five months of legislating in Rome, Caesar goes to Spain and defeats the last remaining Pompeians there and is elected sole consul (45 BC) after this victory at Munda.

With the end of this episode for Caesar, we also see the end of Cato. Love him or hate him, Cato must be given credit for sticking to his word and his Stoic philosophy. Even at the end, Cato refused to cut his hair or trim his beard when Pompey was forced out of Italy and then refused to sit except when eating and refused to lay down except when sleeping, all because of the defeat at Pharsalus. The obstinance of Cato evoked two vastly different works called (for lack of a better term) "The Cato" by Cicero, and Caesar's response, "The AntiCato." From Caesar's words, one can indeed tell that Cato brought out the worst in the otherwise disciplined Caesar. His "AntiCato" is cras and biting and plays off of rumor and exaggeration rather than the truth. This work is wonderfully symptomatic of a Caesar who is tired of war and just wants the inevitable to happen. Caesar sees his victory at hand, but he must still fight in the Senate and out among the frontiers to gain his full glory.

Scene I: Egypt

Caesar and Cleopatra are reclined on couches eating dinner

Caesar: My dear Cleopatra, we must do something about this horrible situation you are in over here. A

woman with your beauty ought to be ruling a country that is just as beautiful – not that low-life brother of yours.

Cleopatra: We cannot forget about my sister, Arsinoe. She and my brother Ptolemy XIII would have me killed if they had it their way!

Caesar: Well, we'll see if we can do something about that – I've beaten Pompey's navy and troops from all around the world – I can quell this small nuisance.

The two get up off their couches and look at each other

Cleopatra: Oh Caesar, you should stay here!

Caesar: Nonsense, I have much to do in Rome! Until now, I've had loyal followers doing my bidding and playing the Senate for fools, but now things are too complicated. I must go back and deal with Cicero and the wretched *boni* myself. After all, I am definitely now the ruler of Rome, my rightful place is inside its walls.

Cleopatra: Oh Caesar, take me with you!

Caesar: Ummm.... Let me think. You got it!

The two exit stage left

Scene II: On the march out of Egypt

Caesar is coming from the right side of the stage with three soldiers in a lone behind him. They stop at center stage

Caesar: What a beautiful country this Africa is! (*He turns to the first soldier*) Legate, remind me to come back and exploit this place for all its worth someday!

Soldier: *Ita, imperator.*

From the left side of the stage comes Pharnacees from Pontus

Pharnacees: I am Pharnacees the Magnificent! The son of Mithridates of Pontus! I cannot be beaten! Caesar, you shall die!

Pharnacees walks up to Caesar and Caesar pushes him down by the face without even looking at him.

Pharnacees falls to the ground and gets out of the scene.

Caesar (*looking to one of his legates*): *Veni, vidi, vici!*

The column marches to stage left

Scene III: Back in Rome at a Voting Assembly

Everyone is gathered around to vote on legislation and on the new officers for next year. Caesar is at the center with the voting tabulator.

First citizen comes up to vote

Tabulator: Tell me citizen, who do you vote for as praetor this year?

Caesar whispers loudly in his ear: "Junius."

Citizen: Junius!

Tabulator: Very well, cast your vote.

The citizen places his vote in the basket

Second citizen walks up.

Caesar (*whispers in his ear*): "Junius"

Second citizen: I am casting my vote for Junius!

He casts his vote in the basket and walks away

Third citizen: Junius!

Casts his vote

Fourth citizen: Junius!

Casts his vote

Caesar (*clapping his hands*): This is great!

Scene IV: In the Senate

Caesar: Fellow Senators, I intend to do nothing more than to restore the Republic the way it once was before that horrible man, Pompey the Great (*gag!!*) tried to take control away from this regal body and I returned Rome to its rightful owners – you.

One Senator speaks to another sitting next to each other

First Senator: Why isn't Cicero speaking up?

Second Senator: Are you kidding? *Deus!* Anything is better than all of this fighting we've had. Caesar may virtually be dictator, but at least that is something – I'm tired of fighting!!

Third Senator: Oh yeah Caesar?! How do you plan on running this city you...*saved*...in your own words?

Caesar: I plan on instituting a program of vast social reform.

Third Senator: Oh sure, what are you going to do? Save our grain problem?

Caesar: Actually yes, I plan on limiting the number of people that qualify for free or state subsidized grain.

Third Senator: Oh yeah, well... what about all those plebs?? If they can't eat, they are going to riot!!

Caesar: Which is why I will settle them in a number of new colonies I myself have conquered.

Third Senator: Oh yeah, well..... well.... What about those horrible gangs that have been ruling our

streets??

Caesar: They're already gone.

Third Senator: Oh yeah, well.... well.... Senators! Don't you see? He is a king! That horrible word that none of us have ever wanted to mutter since we threw out the Tarquins! Pretty soon, Caesar will be dictating the position of the stars!!!

Caesar: Well, in a manner of speaking. I'm doing that too.

All Senators: What???!!!

Caesar: All of us know that our calendar is so wrong that the seasons all take place in the wrong months – I have fixed that. Honorable men, I have solved our problem by coming up with a new Julian calendar, one of 365 days and twelve months. These two extra months I will name after myself of course.

First Senator (*speaking to the other senator*): That boy's good.

Second Senator: No kidding! Maybe we should give him a chance...

Scene V: the Roman Senate

Cicero (*in a flattering voice*): Marcus Portius Cato, a most glorious....

Caesar (*enflamed with rage*):...ly horrid excuse for a man. This man was so....

Cicero:...well respected that others could only hope their children would measure up to the....

Caesar:...insidious, incestuous, and immoral tendencies of this extremely....

Cicero:...well rounded and traditional Stoic of a man.

Caesar: He was hated by everybody and....

Cicero:....loved by all of Rome.

Caesar: We burn the remnants of such a putrid man, but we do not want to foul the very soil Mother Gaia has given us to tend, so I move that we....

Cicero:...give out beloved Stoic philosopher the greatest public funeral ever recorded.

Senators: Caesar, give it up! He's dead, you don't have to deal with him anymore. Let him go!

Caesar looks as if he is going to give a retort to this, but then stops and instead says "Very well."

Caesar (*turns to the side and walks off*): That's right.... Cato's dead. No one can stop me now. My war is over! I am the first and only man of Rome!!

End Play