

# CLEOPATRA

## EGYPT'S LAST QUEEN

She was young, bold, and beautiful.  
But could she save her once-mighty empire?

### PROLOGUE

**Prologue narrator:** Ancient Egypt produced a civilization that lasted thousands of years. Its last capital, the dazzling city of Alexandria, was

a center of learning and culture. But by the first century B.C., Egypt found itself in the shadow of a new superpower: Rome. This **city-state** had conquered most of the Mediterranean Sea area (*see map, p. 18*) and was evolving into a great empire. Then, in 51 B.C., a new Egyptian ruler came to the throne. Only 18, and a woman in a man's world, Cleopatra was determined to make her kingdom great again.

But I fear that Rome's protection has come with a terrible price. **Cleopatra:** Surely Rome will try to wrest control of our kingdom. I must avoid my father's mistakes and keep Egypt free. **Narrator B:** In 48 B.C., her brother tries to force her from the throne. Cleopatra must seek help from the most powerful Roman of all, Julius Caesar. The ties between Egypt's and Rome's rulers become stronger than ever, as Caesar helps Cleopatra become sole ruler. Their alliance also produces a son—Cleopatra's heir, Caesarion.

### CHARACTERS

**Prologue narrator**

**Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt**

**\*Counselor to Cleopatra**

**Delius**

**Mark Antony**

**Octavian (ahk-TAY-vee-un)** } *co-rulers of Rome*

**Caesarion (say-ZAIR-ee-un), Cleopatra's son**

**Octavia, Octavian's sister, later Mark Antony's wife**

**\*Captain of Cleopatra's warships**

**Eiras (EYE-ras)**

**Charmion (SHAR-mee-un)** } *Cleopatra's ladies-in-waiting*

**Epilogue narrator**

**Narrators A-E**

*\*Indicates fictional or composite character. All others were real people.*

### SCENE 1

**Narrator A:** Born in 69 B.C., Cleopatra is the daughter of Egypt's King Ptolemy [TOL-uh-mee] XII. Growing up in Alexandria, she learns from some of the greatest scholars of her time.

When Ptolemy dies in 51 B.C., Cleopatra takes the throne with her brother, Ptolemy XIII. The young Queen knows that big challenges lie ahead. One day at the palace . . .

**Cleopatra VII:** Be honest, Counselor. Tell me the state of the kingdom.

**Counselor:** My Queen, your father borrowed a lot of money from Roman bankers. Then, when he was forced from power by a rebellion, Rome crushed the rebels and put him back on the throne.

### SCENE 2

**Narrator C:** In 44 B.C., Caesar is **assassinated**, and a civil war breaks out in Rome. Two years later, his young officers Octavian and Mark Antony lead a force that defeats the rebel army in the Greek city of Philippi. Antony sets up headquarters in Tarsus. One day . . .

**Dellius:** Antony, come quick! A magnificent barge steered by beautiful maidens is headed upriver! Look at its purple sails—and Queen Cleopatra, lying under a canopy of gold. She looks like a goddess!

**Mark Antony:** She's finally here,

### WORDS TO KNOW

- **assassinate** [v]: to murder, especially a political leader
- **city-state** [n]: a city and its surrounding territory that are independent of any kingdom or country
- **defect** [v] [dee-FEKT]: to leave one side of a conflict and join the other





is she? I heard rumors that she supported the rebels against us, so I summoned her to explain herself.

**Narrator D:** The Queen invites Antony and his officers on board for a feast. A dozen tables overflow with food, and wine is served in golden chalices. Roses are strewn across the floor. The Romans have never seen such luxury.

**Antony:** Here is the glory of Egypt!

**Cleopatra:** Sir, I assure you that I was loyal during your war. I even sent ships to fight for you.

**Antony:** My Queen, I never really doubted you. I just wanted to see if you were as impressive as Caesar said. You are even more so!

**Narrator E:** That autumn, Antony visits Cleopatra in Alexandria, where he is treated like a king. Several months later, she gives birth to twins—fathered by Antony. Forever after, their fates are intertwined.

### SCENE 3

**Narrator A:** It is more than a year before Antony again sees his

ally, Octavian. In 40 B.C., when next they meet at the port city of Brundisium . . .

**Octavian:** You've been absent too long. We're trying to rule over the mightiest empire on Earth, and you're off with the Queen of Egypt!

**Antony:** You can't understand unless you've met her. It isn't so much her beauty. She's smarter than any man I've known. She captivated even our beloved Caesar.

**Octavian:** Cleopatra's Egypt is a dying dream. Rome is the future. Remember what we discussed. You will marry my sister Octavia, and you and I will rule the magnificence that is Rome. Agreed?

**Antony:** Yes! We are brothers now.

**Narrator B:** Antony weds Octavia and makes his base in Athens. In Egypt, Cleopatra is busy trying to provide food for her subjects

during a severe drought. Then things start to go badly for Antony. In 36 B.C., he tries to conquer Parthia (modern-day Iran). But he is beaten and flees to Cleopatra in Alexandria.

**Antony:** I lost half my army! Also, I sent Octavia back to Rome. Our marriage is a lie. Now Octavian blames me for shaming her. He's spreading lies about me all over Rome. I can't go back there.

**Cleopatra:** He wants to rule Rome alone. But here we can be together.

**Narrator C:** The Queen sends for Caesarion, now 13.

**Cleopatra:** My dear son, we're going to have a big celebration! You will be presented to Alexandria as Egypt's King of Kings.

**Caesarion:** Why now, Mother? Are you going away?

**Cleopatra:** No. You and I will be

## “We’re trying to rule over the mightiest empire on Earth, and you’re off with the Queen of Egypt!” —OCTAVIAN





**Antony dies in Cleopatra's arms.**

co-rulers. With Antony at our side, Egypt will be mighty again!

#### SCENE 4

**Narrator D:** Antony is now permanently with Cleopatra. This infuriates Octavian. In Rome . . .

**Octavian:** Octavia, do you know how much land Antony has given to Egypt? Cyprus, Cyrene [modern-day Libya], and Asia Minor. He even says that Caesarion is King of Egypt, the heir of Caesar!

**Octavia:** My husband is a good man. Besides, you can't oppose him without risking another civil war. The true threat is Egypt's Queen.

**Octavian:** I'll get Cleopatra, dead or alive!

**Narrator E:** Octavian declares war on Cleopatra—and, in effect, on Antony. In 31 B.C., the largest navies ever gathered meet in the sea near the Greek city of Actium. Cleopatra and Antony command separate fleets against Octavian's. On Cleopatra's flagship . . .

**Captain:** Many of our allies have **defected** to Octavian. Even Antony's loyal aide Dellius has left us.

**Cleopatra:** Look! Antony's ships have burst into flames, and his

sailors are jumping into the sea!

**Captain:** We must flee to safety.

**Cleopatra:** Who's coming in that little boat? Wait, it's Antony!

**Narrator A:** Antony climbs aboard Cleopatra's ship. Heading back to Egypt, he sits alone, bereft.

**Antony:** I have led my men to slaughter. All is lost!

#### SCENE 5

**Narrator B:** Back in Alexandria, Cleopatra tries to negotiate peace with Octavian. When that fails, she prepares for the arrival of conquering Roman troops.

**Cleopatra:** My children must flee!

**Eiras:** They are ready, my lady.

**Cleopatra:** If I can't get away, I won't let the Romans take me alive. Have you prepared the poisons?

**Eiras:** I have. What about Antony?

**Cleopatra:** He is no help to us now. He just sits, staring off into space.

**Charmion (bursting in):** Antony has stabbed himself!

**Cleopatra:** Bring him to me!

**Narrator C:** Antony dies in Cleopatra's arms. When Octavian hears of Antony's suicide, he rushes to Alexandria. He finds the grief-stricken Queen.

**Octavian:** This is all your fault!

Antony was a noble Roman before you ruined him.

**Cleopatra:** I loved him! I wasn't just trying to save my kingdom. Now I beg you: Spare Caesarion, and let me go quietly into exile. I will never march as a prisoner in your triumphal parade.

**Narrator D:** After Octavian leaves, Cleopatra has no illusions.

**Cleopatra:** He's saving us for the humiliation of defeat. I cannot live like that. Bring me the poison.

**Narrator E:** Cleopatra takes the poison. In a matter of hours, Octavian's messengers find her dead beside Antony's body.

#### EPILOGUE

**Epilogue narrator:** Despite his anger, Octavian buried Cleopatra and Antony together in Alexandria. Caesarion ruled as King for 18 days before Octavian had him killed. Finally, in that year of 30 B.C., the centuries-old kingdom of Egypt was reduced to a province of Rome.

Three years later, Octavian changed his name to Caesar Augustus. He became the first Emperor of a Roman Empire that dominated the world for more than four centuries.

—Bryan Brown