



Ancient Fanfiction: Cicero

By Zac Copeland-Greene

Cicero's heart was racing. He felt as if his chest were about to explode; he was not used to being so afraid. He was no stranger to fear, of course. It would have been inhuman of him not to have been afraid after the attack on his life by the revolutionist Catiline. And how could he not have felt even the smallest bit of despondency when he was exiled from Rome by his nemesis Clodius?

But every time life had thrown Cicero down, he lept right back up again. Was he not Cicero after all? Was he not Rome's greatest orator, its most successful lawyer, and the politician who single handedly saved the Roman Republic during his consulship? And that's not even to mention that he was a philosopher, a poet and a writer of the most exquisite letters.

Whatever life threw at Cicero, he knew that he could find a way out of it with his wits and his words. This time, however, Cicero had perhaps taken his wit and his words a bit too far. This time Cicero knew he was going to die.

It had all started the year before, when Julius Caesar had been killed. Cicero hadn't been involved in the assassination per se, but he didn't necessarily oppose it either. He spent the next 12 months proclaiming that Mark Antony, Caesar's closest associate, was a cheap man whore, a drunk and a threat to the republic, and chose instead to back Caesar's nephew and adopted son, Octavian.

Things had been going swimmingly for Cicero, right until Antony and Octavian declared an alliance between themselves and ordered the death of all their enemies. Cicero was an enemy to Antony because of relentless verbal attacks. So Cicero fled



from Rome, not for the first time in his life. But this time the soldiers had caught up with him.

And so Cicero sat in his litter awaiting them, feeling his heart beat faster than ever before. Cicero knew he was going to die and he knew there was little he could do to prevent it. So he thought that the great Cicero must face death with his head held high.

He gathered himself together to leave his litter, ready to look death right in the eyes. He began to move the curtain that shielded him from the outside world. This way the people of the future would remember his honour; they would remember his nobility; they would -

Cicero's severed head hit the floor before he had a chance to finish glorifying the nobility of his death.

Context:

Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman lawyer and politician who lived in the 1st Century BCE. He is known for being one of the greatest orators to have lived and his speeches are still studied today for their rhetorical value. In his speeches he creates a person for himself that seems very proud and full of himself, although in much of his personal correspondence which survives a far humbler side to Cicero comes out.

Resources:

About Cicero: <https://www.ancient.eu/Cicero/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/apr/04/classics-classics>

Read one of Cicero's speeches against Mark Antony: https://lexundria.com/cic_phil/2/y