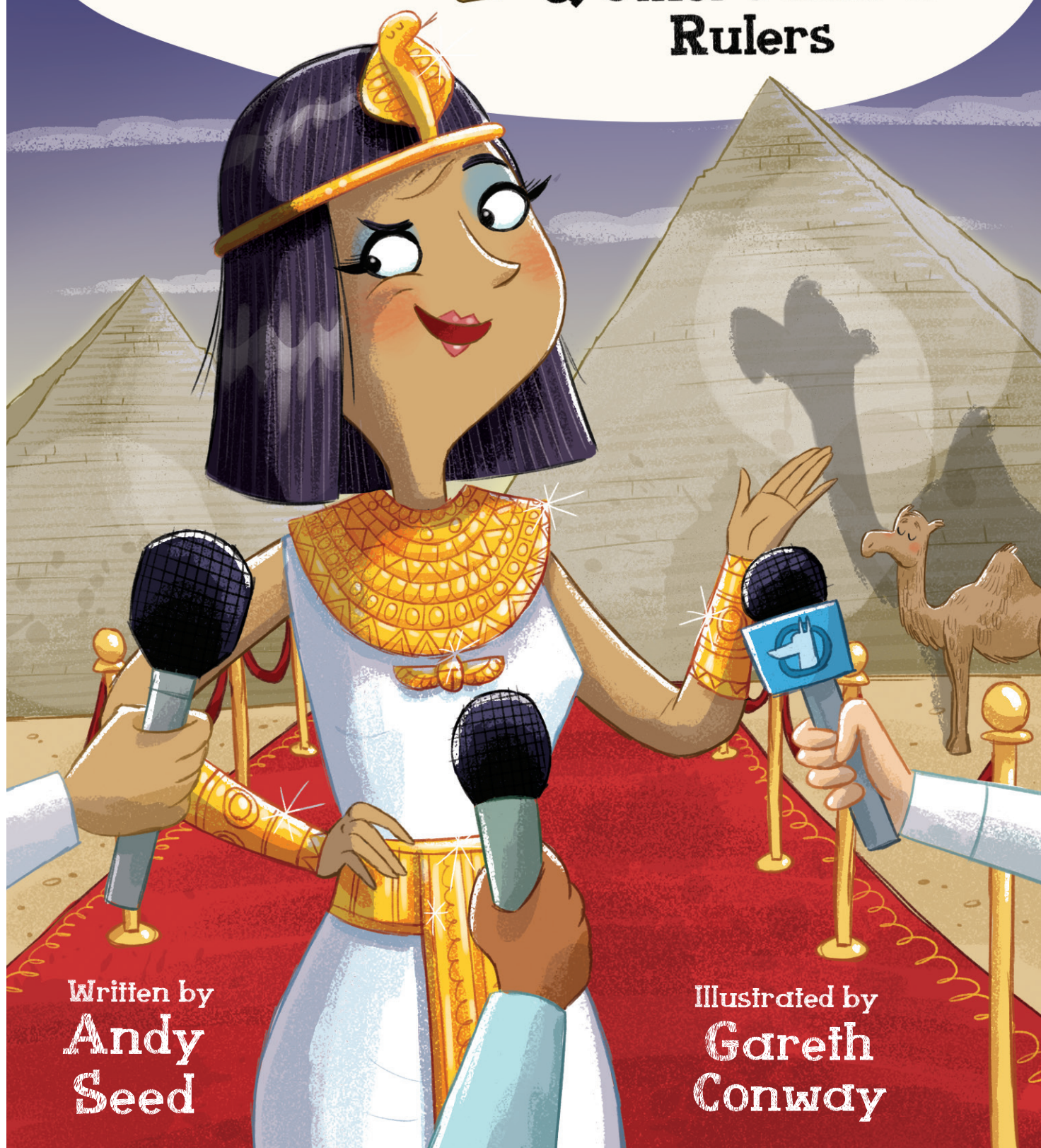


# Interview with **Cleopatra**

**& Other Famous  
Rulers**



Written by  
**Andy  
Seed**

Illustrated by  
**Gareth  
Conway**



## — An interview with — **Cleopatra**

For this interview, I travel back to the year 32<sub>BCE</sub>, to Ancient Egypt, to meet possibly the most famous queen that ever lived...

**Q. Hello, er, your majesty, it's very good of you to meet me. This is exciting - I've never chatted to a pharaoh before.**

**A. I have met many strange people in my time but nothing as strange as you.**

**Q. That's because I am from the future!**

**A. So my advisers tell me... quite a claim. Well, we rulers are always eager to discover what tomorrow brings.**

**Q. Ah, you want to know the weather forecast?  
Hang on while I just open the app...**

**A. What is that curious object? Some kind of divining stone? An amulet?**



**Q. No, just my old smartphone.**

**A.** A what?

**Q. Er, it's a device for, well, ooh, this is going to be quite tricky to explain... Oh, no WiFi. Well, I suppose it is 32<sup>BCE</sup> and we are in the desert...**

**A.** Stranger, what exactly do you want?

**Q. May I just ask you a few questions? It won't take long.**

**A.** Hmmm, very well. But if I think you're a Roman spy I will have my soldiers cut you into dog food.

**Q. Fair enough, gulp. So, er, what was your childhood like?**

**A.** I was born and brought up here in the Royal Palace in Alexandria. My father was Ptolemy XII, pharaoh, so my childhood was not exactly ordinary.

**Q. It's a very grand building, lots of bling.**

**A.** Of course, it must be suitable for rulers of the mighty Kingdom of Egypt. And now it is mine.

**Q. Er, is that Greek you're speaking, not Egyptian?**

**A.** Correct. I speak many languages, being highly educated. We rulers use Greek because the powerful

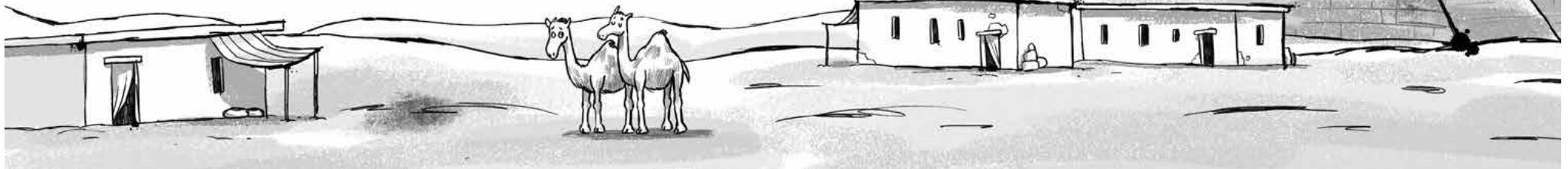
warrior Alexander the Great invaded this land 300 years ago. He brought Greek culture here, and this city is named after him. Of course, I speak Egyptian too, which is one of the reasons I'm popular - my father never bothered to learn it. Which land are you from, anyway?

**Q. I'm from Britain. It's a big island far to the north - think Stonehenge, not pyramids. Or maybe shopping centres these days.**

**A.** Ah, Britannia? Julius Caesar invaded it in 55<sup>BCE</sup>, I recall. He said it was cold and damp and the people were wild, unruly mobs with painted skin.

**Q. Yep, that's the place. Still the same today. So, do you rule Egypt on your own?**

**A.** Pah, there's a foolish law that I must govern with a male. In theory my son Caesarion rules with me, but he is just a little boy. Before that I had to put up with sharing power with my useless brothers.



**Q. Oh, I see. So, where are they now?**

**A.** Tragically they are no longer with us. They both met, erm, an unfortunate end...

**Q. Oh dear, what happened?**

**A.** It all began when my father the pharaoh died in 51BCE. I was the eldest, and cleverest, so should have ruled as queen alone, but because of tradition, my younger brother Ptolemy was made co-ruler with me, ugh.

**Q. Yeah, it's bad enough sharing sweets with your kid bro... but wait, I thought your dad was called Ptolemy?**

**A.** My father was Ptolemy XII, my brother was Ptolemy XIII. It's another tiresome tradition.

**Q. Ptolemy about it!**

**A.** What?

**Q. Oh, sorry, it's a pun - because we don't say the p... considered hilarious in later Britannia. Anyway, what happened next?**

**A.** I had to marry him.

**Q. YOUR BROTHER?**

**A.** And he was only 10.

**Q. WHATTTT! That is A SHOCKER!**

**A.** It wasn't a proper marriage. More like an old Egyptian custom.

**Q. It's still weird. Anyway, how did your mini hubby-king-brother croak?**

**A.** The fool wanted to rule alone when he was 13. Pressured by his greedy advisors, he tried to grab power and get the army on his side. I had to flee for my life.

**Q. That's teenagers for you...**

**A.** It was an outrage! I was a successful queen too, helping the country become safer and richer. I had built stores of food to guard against times of flood and drought, and I dealt with the lawless gangs of robbers that plagued the people. But Ptolemy did not last long - Rome came to my rescue. Well, Julius Caesar.

**Q. The Roman geezer! Sorry. Carry on, Cleo.**

**A.** Hmmmm. Anyway, Rome is a mighty state that rules many of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. And just like here, there are always rival leaders trying to gain power. Sixteen years ago it was Caesar and Pompey, two strong Roman generals with soldiers behind them. Julius was gaining the upper hand so Pompey came here to Egypt, thinking he would be safe.

**Q. But he wasn't?**

**A.** Exactly. My reckless little brother saw a chance to get Caesar on his side, to help get rid of me. He sent his men to kill Pompey and cut off his head.

**Q. Yikes! What then?**

**A.** Caesar came here to Alexandria. He wanted to sort out the mess in Egypt and gain some of our famed wealth. I saw my chance to meet him and get him on my side. Of course, my brother was still in charge in the city at that point, so I had to be sneaky and clever. I got some trusted friends to hide me in a rolled-up rug and smuggle it into the palace so I could meet Caesar.

**Q. What did he say?**

**A.** Lots. I was just 21 but full of passion and ability to lead. He was impressed that I could speak Latin as

well as Greek, Egyptian and more. He soon realised I was a far better ruler than that squirt Ptolemy. So, yes, I charmed him, won him over and he agreed to help me get rid of my upstart rival.

**Q. Did Ptolemy fight?**

**A.** He tried to get his feeble army to take us on, but he was no match for my forces plus Caesar's Roman ships at the Battle of the Nile. He drowned trying to swim away in his armour...

**Q. Oo-er. So did Julius Caesar stay with you after that?**

**A.** Good question. We were a couple for a while, and even had a baby together, but he had a wife back in Rome and had to return eventually. I went there too, which was stupendously awkward...



Anyway, to make things worse, many important Romans thought Caesar was getting too powerful. A group of them hatched a plot and stabbed him to death in 44BCE.

**Q. Eek, how do you cope with all the DANGER in these times?**

**A.** A person in my position cannot escape it. Anyway, I returned to Egypt for safety, and things were quieter for a while until the next Roman general arrived.



**Q: Who was that?**

**A:** Mark Anthony. He had been a close friend of Caesar's. He came to see me and we were, er, drawn together. Having the protection of a powerful Roman

leader makes me more secure here as queen, so it was a smart move, and I liked him. Although I did have to deal with a second brother.

**Q. Another Ptolemy?**

**A.** Yes, he had a little accident with some poison, poor boy. But Mark Anthony is still here, and we are together with our three children. Egypt is now peaceful and prosperous.

**Q. No trouble at the moment then?**

**A.** Oh there's always trouble. Anthony has a rival in Rome called Octavian. It's the usual story - he wants to grab power. He's not very happy with us and has plans to come over to fight us but we can deal with him. Wait, you're from the future - you must know what happens! Do we win?

**Q. Erm, I don't know, I missed that history lesson at school. I was away with a sprained chin.**

**A.** Why don't you ask your Phartsmeone thing?

**Q. My smartphone? No signal, phew...**

**A.** Are you HIDING SOMETHING from me? Maybe you are one of Octavian's spies! GUARDS!

**Yeek! Come on tranimalator - take me back to drizzling Britannia, NOW!**



# The end of Cleopatra

## What happened next?

- The Roman general Octavian defeated Cleopatra and Mark Anthony in a battle.
- They escaped to Egypt separately, with Octavian's soldiers in pursuit.
- Many people believe that Mark Anthony killed himself because he thought Cleopatra was dead. Whoops, she wasn't...
- The story goes that she then poisoned herself (some say from a snake bite, ouch) and died, in 30BCE.
- Octavian was later known as Augustus, and became the first ever Roman Emperor.

## Was Cleopatra beautiful?

We don't know what she looked like for sure, but she certainly wore eye-popping clothes. There are some ancient images found on these things:

- Coins
- Wall paintings
- Sculptures
- Vases



In some of these she looks noble and powerful rather than beautiful. Roman historians say she was clever, brave and charming. It's clear she was in many ways **AMAZING**.

## Why is Cleo so famous?

- There were not many female rulers in the ancient world.
- She was the last pharaoh.
- She caused a scandal in Rome by having affairs with two married men.
- Her story has been told by great writers such as William Shakespeare.
- There are OODLES of books and films about her!

### CleoFACTra

1. She became queen when she was just a teenager.
2. Cleo was the richest woman in the world.
3. She had an extra-posh royal boat covered in gold.
4. She sometimes dressed like Isis, a winged goddess.

