Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page i

Praise for *Julius Caesar*

"Elegant, learned, and compulsively readable, *Julius Caesar* moves from broad sweep to brilliant detail. Freeman triumphantly tells the story of one of history's greatest and most terrible figures. He is as knowledgeable about Cleopatra's Alexandria as he is about Celtic tribes, and he writes about the Roman Senate with the assurance of an insider."

—Barry Strauss, author of *The Trojan War* and Professor of History and Classics, Cornell University

"Julius Caesar packed more into his life than most of history's great men—and Philip Freeman unpacks it all with skill and clarity. . . . The scholar will find much to admire in this book, but, better still, the newcomer to ancient Rome will turn its pages with excitement, enlightenment—and sheer narrative suspense."

—Anthony Everitt, author of *Augustus* and *Cicero*

"[Freeman's] cultural and historical knowledge bring the emperor to life and humanize him in a way no writer before him has succeeded in doing."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Can Alexander Hamilton possibly have been right that Julius Caesar was 'the greatest man that ever lived'? Reading Philip Freeman's pacy and panoptic narrative of his life from unpromising early beginnings to the fateful Ides is one very rewarding approach to answering that perennially fascinating question."

—Paul Cartledge, Professor of Greek History, University of Cambridge

"Clear, concise, and packed with fascinating details, *Julius Caesar* skillfully captures the essence of a complex, ambitious leader. . . . Freeman understands what the newcomer to ancient Rome needs to know—and what the reader looking for a refresher course longs to rediscover."

—Jeff Sypeck, author of *Becoming Charlemagne*

"Philip Freeman has written a compact but thorough account of the life and achievements of this historical giant."

—*Booklist*

"Freeman is one of those rare writers whose enthusiasm for a subject is so irresistible, so contagious, that in their hands any subject becomes compelling. . . . Authoritative, accessible, *Julius Caesar* is a book that will be of interest not only to those studying Latin and Roman history, but to anyone fascinated by the mesmerizing power of ambition."

—Arthur T. Vanderbilt II, *The Star-Ledger* (Newark)

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page ii

ALSO BY PHILIP FREEMAN

The Philosopher and the Druids:
A Journey Among the Ancient Celts

St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography

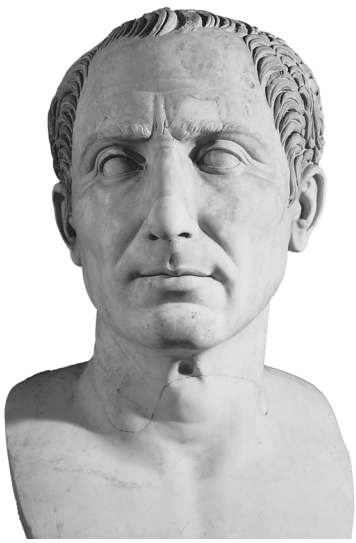
War, Women, and Druids: Eyewitness Reports
and Early Accounts of the Ancient Celts

The Galatian Language: A Comprehensive Survey of the Language
of the Ancient Celts in Greco-Roman Asia Minor

Ireland and the Classical World

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page iii

JULIUS CAESAR



PHILIP FREEMAN

SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS
New York London Toronto Sydney

SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 2008 by Philip Freeman

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or
portions thereof in any form whatsoever.
For information address Simon & Schuster Paperbacks Subsidiary Rights Department,
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

First Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition May 2009

SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS and colophon are
registered trademarks of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
For information about special discounts for bulk purchases,
please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at
1-866-506-1949 or business@simonandschuster.com

Designed by Dana Sloan

Manufactured in the United States of America

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:
Freeman, Philip, 1961–
Julius Caesar / Philip Freeman.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Caesar, Julius. 2. Generals—Rome—Biography. 3. Heads of state—Rome—
Biography. 4. Rome—History—Republic, 265–30 B.C. I. Title.
DG261.F784 2008
937.05092—dc22
[B]
2007034482

ISBN-13: 978-0-7432-8953-5
ISBN-10: 0-7432-8953-6
ISBN-13: 978-0-7432-8954-2 (pbk)
ISBN-10: 0-7432-8954-4 (pbk)

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page v

CONTENTS

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page vi

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page vii

JULIUS CAESAR

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page viii

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 1

PREFACE

One day not long ago I was standing in front of my Latin class, lecturing on the correct formation of imperfect verbs. It was a beautiful fall day on campus, the kind that practically begs college students to toss a Frisbee around the grassy quad in front of the library. I was nearing the end of the hour and rapidly losing my audience as their eyes drifted to the idyllic scene outside the classroom windows. So I decided to postpone grammar and take a detour into Roman history.

"Okay," I asked, "who's heard of Julius Caesar?" Everyone in the class raised their hands. "All right then," I continued, "what can you tell me about him?"

A long silence followed, then one young woman offered, "He was stabbed to death wasn't he? I remember reading about it in a Shakespeare play back in high school."

"Excellent," I said, "but does anyone know when his murder occurred?"

They carefully studied their desk tops until one student looked up and said, "Wait, it was the Ides of March!"

"Good, good," I responded, always eager to encourage class participation. "He was killed by a group of Roman senators in Pompey's theater on the Ides of March, which is of course March 15. Now can anyone tell me something else about his life?"

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 2

Silence again. Then a student in back asked, "Wasn't he an epileptic? And he was born by caesarean section, right?"

"Partly right," I said. "He did have epilepsy, but the caesarean story is a myth."

I then devoted the last five minutes of class to filling them in on a few little-known facts about Julius Caesar. I told them how he was born into a poor but noble family; how he was ordered by the dictator Sulla to divorce the wife he loved, but refused, even though it meant a death sentence; how he was kidnapped by pirates as a young man; how he rose to power and became a great lawyer, politician, general, engineer, historian, and high priest of Rome; and finally, how he invented the calendar we still use today.

Class time was over and the students began heading out the door into the sunshine. I erased the board and collected my papers, then heard one of my students in the hallway say to a friend, "Man, that was amazing—I didn't know Caesar did all that stuff." It was one of those moments professors live for, when we realize a student is actually excited about learning something new. As I shuffled back to my office to grade a stack of waiting papers, I wondered how many people really know the true story of Caesar.

Julius Caesar was one of the greatest heroes of human history—or one of its most pernicious villains, depending on whom you believe. The medieval poet Dante assigned him a blessed afterlife among the most virtuous pagans while sentencing his two leading murderers, Brutus and Cassius, to the lowest level of hell. Mark Twain wrote that Caesar waged wars against barbarians not because they had done him any harm, "but because he wanted their land, and desired to confer the blessings of civilization upon their widows and orphans." Shakespeare tried to have it both ways, praising both Caesar and the conspirators who slew him. Modern scholars have been equally divided concerning Caesar's legacy. Some have seen him as a

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 3

paradigm of the just ruler, but in the wake of twentieth-century dictators and devastating wars, other historians have turned a cold eye to a man who caused the death of so many and established the rule of emperors over elected magistrates. This biography, however, comes neither to praise Caesar overmuch nor to bury him among the tyrants of history. My goal is simply to tell the story of Caesar's life and times for anyone who wants to learn more about this unique man and the world in which he lived.

I am deeply indebted to those who helped me make this book a reality. To the many excellent professors at the University of Texas and Harvard, who patiently taught me about the fascinating world of ancient Rome, my eternal thanks. My home institution of Luther College tucked away among the beautiful hills of northeast Iowa was encouraging and supportive as always. Joëlle Delbourgo, Bob Bender, and Johanna Li patiently guided me through the publishing process, while Janey Lee of Hanee Designs created a beautiful Web site and allowed me to use her photographs of the Roman Forum. Many thanks as well to the libraries of Harvard University and Bowdoin College. As always, I am grateful to my long suffering wife, Alison, who put up with endless dinner-table talk on Roman politics, Vestal Virgins, and Gaulish tribal structure. But most of all I would like to thank my students who for the last fifteen years have helped me see the classical world through ever new eyes. Your enthusiasm is what makes teaching the best job in the world.

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 4

TIMELINE

B.C.	
753	Traditional date for the founding of Rome
c. 500	Beginning of the Roman Republic
390	Gauls sack Rome
264–241	First Punic War
218–202	Second Punic War; Hannibal invades Italy
149–146	Third Punic War; Carthage destroyed
133	Tiberius Gracchus elected tribune
121	Gaius Gracchus killed
107	Marius first elected consul
105	Cimbri and Teutones defeat Roman armies
100	Julius Caesar born on July 13
91	Beginning of Italian War
88	Sulla marches on Rome
87	Caesar chosen as *flamen dialis*
84	Caesar marries Cornelia
81–79	Sulla dictator in Rome
80	Caesar serves in Asia, awarded the *corona civica*
75	Caesar captured by pirates
73–71	Revolt of Spartacus
69	Caesar's funeral speeches for Julia (wife of Marius) and Cornelia

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 5

67 Caesar marries Pompeia
63 Cicero elected consul. Conspiracy of Catiline. Caesar elected *pontifex maximus*
62 Scandal of Clodius. Caesar divorces Pompeia
61 Caesar governor of Further Spain
60 Beginning of the First Triumvirate
59 Caesar elected consul. Pompey marries Julia. Caesar marries Calpurnia
58 Beginning of the Gallic War
57 Caesar fights the Belgae
56 Caesar's campaign against the Veneti
55 Caesar crosses the Rhine. First expedition to Britain
54 Second expedition to Britain. Death of Julia. Revolt of Ambiorix
53 Crassus killed in Parthia
52 Clodius murdered in Rome. Revolt of Vercingetorix in Gaul
51 End of Gallic War
50 Curio prevents recall of Caesar
49 Caesar crosses the Rubicon
48 Caesar defeats Pompey at Pharsalia, crosses to Egypt
47 Caesar defeats Pharnaces at Zela, lands in Africa
46 Suicide of Cato. Caesar celebrates triumph at Rome, appointed dictator for ten years
45 Caesar defeats last of Pompeian forces in Spain, appointed dictator for life
44 Murder of Caesar on the Ides of March
42 Brutus and Cassius defeated at Philippi
31 Octavius defeats Antony and Cleopatra at Actium

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 6

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 7

Prologue

ON THE BANKS OF THE RUBICON

A cold winter rain fell on the mountains near the sea. Only a trickle at first, the water gathered into a tiny stream that quickly fell down a steep and rocky valley past empty shepherd huts, bursting at last onto the narrow coastal plain. For thousands of years, travelers moving from the broad and fertile countryside beneath the snow-covered Alps of northern Italy to the warm southern lands along the Adriatic coast had crossed this small river. In summer, when the rains were scarce, the river shrank to little more than a lazy creek. But in winter, its waters grew swift and deep.

On this blustery January day in the year 49 B.C., Gaius Julius Caesar sat on the banks of the Rubicon River and gazed south toward Rome. Caesar had spent the last eight years in a relentless and often brutal campaign to bring Gaul—roughly modern France—into the Roman world. This huge new province served not only to subdue the troublesome Celts and keep the fierce Germans on their own side of the Rhine, but the war booty Caesar gained made him a very wealthy man. Enormous financial resources, popular military victories, impeccable ancestry, and one of the finest minds the ancient world had yet produced were enough to terrify Caesar's political en-

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 8

emies. These self-proclaimed defenders of the Roman Republic had for decades used their considerable power to fight that which Rome needed most and which they most feared—reform. The conservative party, or *optimates,* led by the indomitable Cato were determined to rule the vast Roman lands stretching from Spain to Syria for the benefit of a few families according to ancient tradition, as if Rome were still a small village on the Tiber surrounded by seven hills. The power, vision, and ruthless ambition of Caesar were the biggest threats they had ever faced—and so they were determined to destroy him at any cost.

To be fair, Caesar had tried his best to prevent civil war. When his enemies proposed that he be stripped of his command in Gaul so that he could be prosecuted in Rome, Caesar had calmly outmaneuvered them. When the weak leadership of his ally, the aging general Pompey, and the quarrelsome senators allowed the city of Rome to slip into chaos and mobs to burn down the buildings of the Forum, Caesar held his hand while the Senate made Pompey a virtual dictator. When Cato and his allies demanded Caesar turn over two of his veteran legions to fight the Parthians, he complied, even though the soldiers were kept in Italy to serve Pompey. Caesar had even offered to dismiss his army at the same time as Pompey to avoid trouble, but the Senate instead rejected all his overtures of peace, assaulted his representatives, and passed an emergency decree against him, demanding that he surrender himself into the hands of his scheming enemies.

And thus as the new year began, Caesar had approached the Rubicon River, the boundary dividing his allotted province of Italian Gaul from Italy proper. He had left behind most of his vast army, bringing with him only one legion. But for a general with any troops under arms to cross the river would be treason and a clear declaration of war against Rome.

Caesar spent the day in a nearby town watching gladiators train and dining with friends. As the sun set, Caesar finished dinner and asked his guests to await his return. With just a few trusted compan-

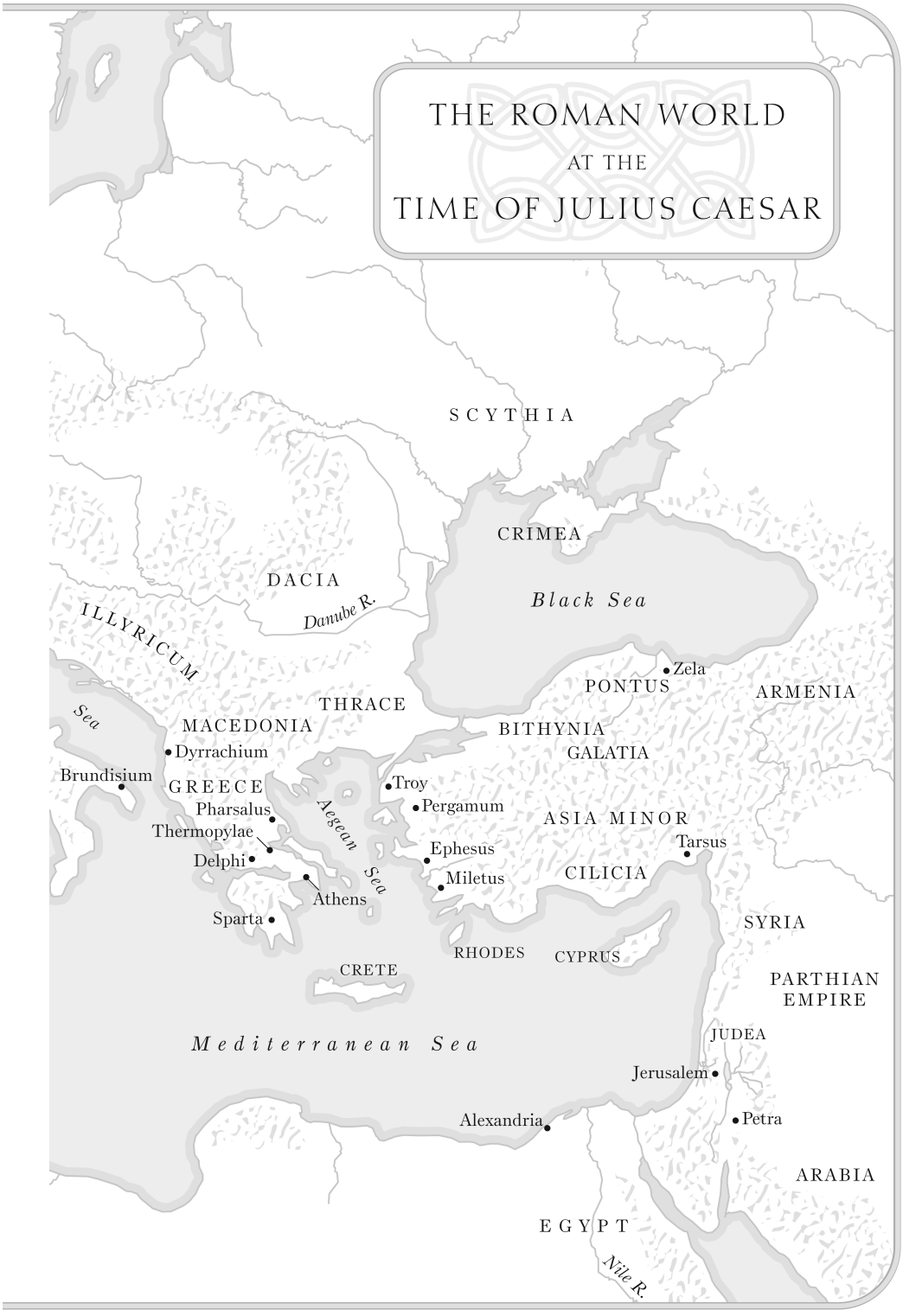
Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 9

ions, Caesar climbed into a rented cart and drove away from the Rubicon at first, only to switch direction soon and head toward the river. At the banks of the rushing stream he stopped and withdrew by himself a little distance to reflect on the magnitude of what he proposed to do. He had been troubled recently by dreams of what lay ahead for his beloved Rome if he proceeded. He seemed to his nearby friends to be deeply distressed, wavering back and forth, fiercely debating with himself about his next step. Caesar returned to his comrades still unsure and asked for their thoughts. They all agreed there would be great suffering ahead for Rome if he crossed the Rubicon, but the consequences of inaction would be his own downfall.

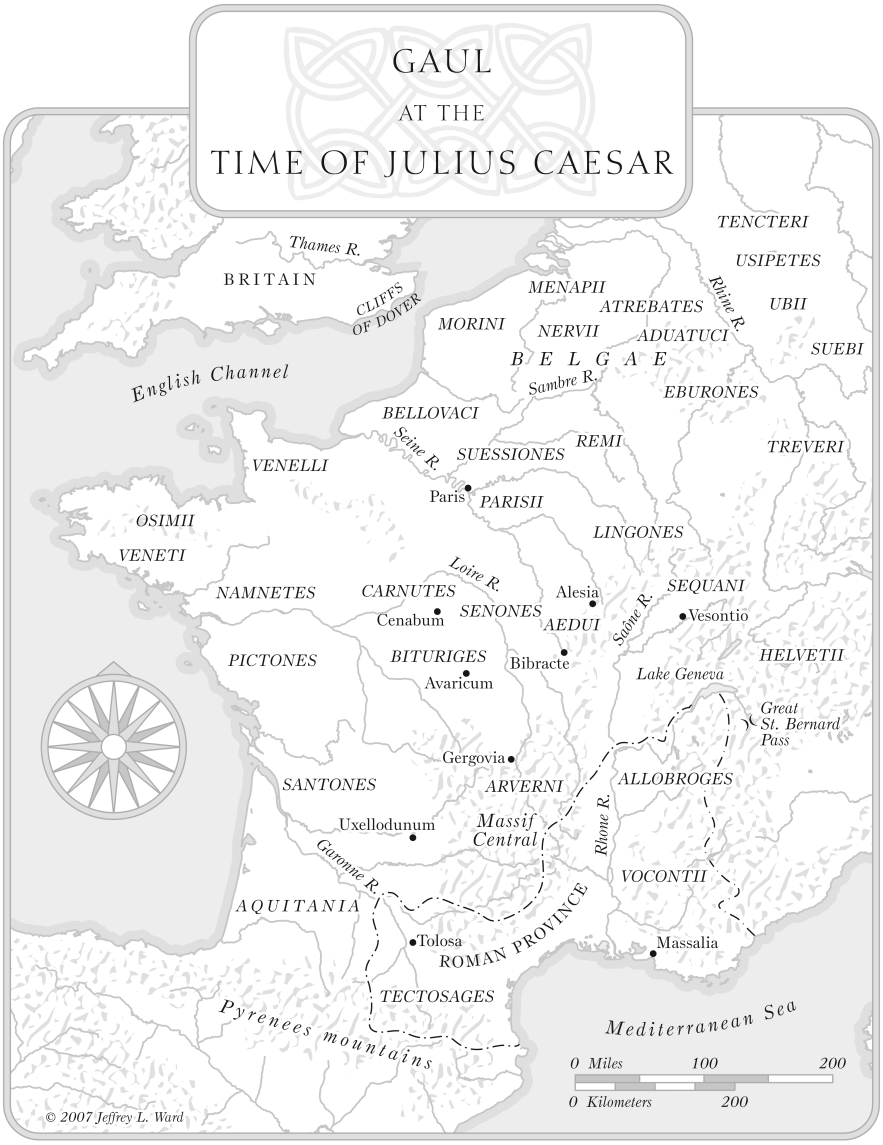
At last, Caesar arose with an expression of calm assurance on his face. He walked to the edge of the water and lifting his voice for all to hear, he shouted, "Let the dice fly high," and stepped swiftly into the icy stream.

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 10

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 11



Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 12



Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 13

I

THE EARLY YEARS

> The pirates demanded twenty talents for Caesar's ransom, but he only laughed at them for not knowing his true worth. He raised the price himself to fifty.
>
> —Plutarch

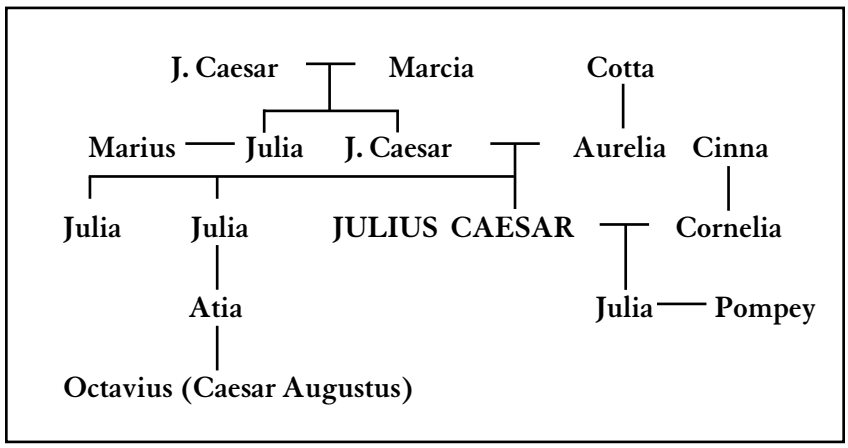
In the early second century A.D., the Roman biographer Suetonius wrote his justly famous *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*—one of our best sources on Roman rulers from Julius Caesar and Augustus to Caligula, Claudius, and Domitian. Unfortunately, the beginning of an ancient book or a papyrus scroll was always the portion most likely to be lost to the ravages of time. Thus the first few chapters of Suetonius's *Life of Julius Caesar* disappeared forever sometime in the early Middle Ages, so our only good source on the childhood of Caesar begins: *annum agens sextum decimum* ("In his sixteenth year . . ."). As frustrating as this is for our attempt to reconstruct Caesar's life, it's not unusual to have so little reliable information about the early years of any famous figure from the past, be it Socrates, Joan of Arc, or even Abraham Lincoln. Since none of them knew they were going to be famous someday, few people paid any attention to them until they were adults.

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 14

Fortunately, we do know a great deal about the time and place in which Caesar grew up. Because the first century B.C. was such a formative period in Roman history and because so many surviving ancient authors, such as Cicero and Suetonius, wrote about the turmoil of those years, we can understand events during Caesar's youth better than many closer to our own.

The Julian family claimed descent from Julus, also known as Ascanius, the son of the Trojan warrior Aeneas, and grandson of the goddess Venus, yet they had long been on the margins of Roman power. Like financially embarrassed nobility of the Victorian era who had long ago sold the last of the family silverware, all the Julians had left by the late second century B.C. was their impeccable family name. None of Caesar's ancestors had held high office for many years. It was only with his aunt Julia's marriage to the lowborn but wealthy and ambitious general Gaius Marius that the family began to rise again. Caesar's father was then able to marry Aurelia, daughter of the former consul Cotta from a well-to-do family. Aurelia was cultured, highly intelligent, and absolutely devoted to the welfare and career of her son.

CAESAR'S FAMILY TREE



Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 15

Caesar would one day be hailed as a god, but his birth in the year 100 B.C. was quite ordinary. The story that he was delivered by caesarean section is a myth that grew out of befuddled etymology. Roman folklore held that a child cut out of his mother's womb was bound for greatness. Since such an operation meant almost certain death for a pregnant woman at this time, it may have been that a mother sacrificing her own life for her child was thought to convey special powers upon him. The best argument against Caesar being born by caesarean section is that his mother, Aurelia, in fact lived for almost fifty years after his birth. There were genuine cases of caesarean delivery in the Roman era, but this usually happened when a woman had either just died in childbirth or was not expected to survive. Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal, was reportedly born by caesarean as were other famous Romans, including an ancestor of Julius Caesar. According to some ancient sources, this ancestor gave the Caesar branch of the Julian clan their name because he was *caesus* (cut) from his mother's uterus. While this is possible, the long flowing hair (*caesaries*) of one of Caesar's progenitors is another possible origin of the family name. Following Roman custom, Caesar was given the same name as his father.

We know little about Caesar's father, except that like many Roman men active in politics and the military, he was seldom at home. The demands of the Forum and army service, as well as Roman custom, meant that Caesar grew up with his father as only an occasional participant in his life. The elder Caesar was a senior magistrate in the late nineties B.C. and afterward served in the province of Asia. In 85 B.C., just as Caesar reached the age of manhood, when his father would have taken a greater role in his upbringing, the elder Caesar died at Pisa, probably during military service. Caesar had at least two sisters, both named Julia. One of these Julias had a daughter named Atia, who became the mother of Octavius, the future emperor Augustus.

Whether on a farm or in the city, the heart of Roman society was

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 16

the family. This consisted of the father, mother, sons, unmarried daughters, and anyone else in the home, including slaves. The eldest male as *paterfamilias* had absolute control over his household. He could have his wife executed or sell his children into slavery if he so desired, but such extreme actions were restrained by community pressure and quite rare. Roman law considered women incompetent to manage their own affairs and so they passed seamlessly from the control of fathers to husbands as their legal guardians. But again, theory did not always match practice. At least within the walls of the home, a Roman matron ruled her household, and few husbands were foolish enough to interfere with a wife's domestic control. Divorce was easy to obtain, with a wife retaining whatever property she brought to the marriage. Infant mortality from disease was high and the abandonment of unwanted children, especially baby girls, on deserted hillsides was all too common.

Several related families formed a *gens* or clan. Every Roman bore the title of his clan as part of his name. Thus Gaius Julius Caesar had *Gaius* as his personal name, *Julius* as his clan name (being a member of the Julian *gens*), with *Caesar* as a cognomen or extra name. This final part was often a nickname in origin and frequently humorous. The cognomen also passed on from father to son, so that they had no particular relation to the individual. Among other cognomen were *Brutus* ("stupid"), *Naso* ("big nose"), and *Cicero* ("chickpea").

From earliest times, Rome was divided into haves and have-nots. The ancient families of prestige, such as the Fabian, Cornelian, and Julian clans, were know as patricians, while the mass of the common people were called plebeians or plebs. The plebeians were freeborn and often owned a small plot of land or their own business, but they could never hope to rise to the lofty heights of the patricians. Most patricians and plebeians saw this sharp division of society as the normal order of the world. A plebeian could even benefit from the sys-

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 17

tem if he attached himself to a patrician as his client. The client-patron system was one of the fundamental relationships in Roman society. If a plebeian became a client of a patrician, he was bound to render political support and sometimes military service to his patron. The patron, in turn, added to his own reputation with each new client and rewarded his followers with occasional money and backing in any community disputes or legal problems. It was a mutually beneficial relationship that had no legal standing, but was deeply respected and rarely breeched. A Roman might abandon his wife or sell his vote to the highest bidder, but the client-patron relationship was sacred.

In spite of the close relationship between clients and patrons, Rome during the early days of the Republic was a hotbed of tension between patricians and plebeians. The frustration over the patrician stranglehold on power and the increasing awareness by plebeians of growing political reforms in the Greek world led the plebeians to organize themselves to fight for reform. A spate of hard economic times in the fifth century B.C. also brought the plebeians to the boiling point. Most patricians could weather the storms of crop shortages and economic woes, but many plebeians were deeply in debt and some were even forced into slavery to pay back their creditors. In a foreshadowing of tensions in following centuries, the average Roman was also called on more and more to serve longer periods in the army far from home. When Rome controlled just a small area around the city, military service was always close by and didn't significantly interfere with work on the farm. But as Rome expanded in central Italy, plebeian soldiers were forced to spend extended periods on campaign farther from home. Without men to work the fields, some smaller farms collapsed.

The plebeians devised a clever method to exact change from the patrician rulers. In 494 B.C. they marched out of town en masse and settled themselves on a nearby hill. Without the plebeians to provide labor and service, the patricians were at a loss to run the city. The

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 18

Senate sent a respected negotiator named Menenius Agrippa to the plebeian camp, who proceeded to tell them the Roman parable of the Belly and the Limbs. Once upon a time, he declared, the limbs of the body grew tired of laboring to feed the belly. They decided to starve the belly until it realized how much it needed the rest of the body. But of course as the belly grew empty the whole body weakened. It was then the limbs realized that the belly too had an important job to perform.

The plebeians were moved by the obvious parallels to their own situation and promised to return to Rome, but not before they gained official recognition of their own rights and representatives. Four more times during the next century, the plebeians withdrew from Rome when they felt the patricians were treating them badly. Each time they wrested more power from the patricians. But a strange thing happened as time went by. A few plebeians were growing wealthy as they prospered in business and trade, even as some old patrician families faded and were left with little but their ancient names to boast of. The nouveau riche among the plebeians then began to form alliances with those patrician families which still maintained their wealth and political power. From this fusion sprang a new aristocracy for Rome—a patrician-plebeian nobility that in time would become as exclusive and power-hungry as the ancient patrician families. The mass of the plebeian population was left out of true political power and continued to grumble, while impoverished old patrician families, like the Julians, dreamed of a better day.

Caesar was born and raised in the Subura neighborhood of Rome, just a short walk from the Forum. The area was an odd choice for Aurelia and her husband of the noble Julian clan. The Subura district was a lower-class neighborhood in a small valley known for tradesmen, prostitutes, and foreign residents, including many Jews. It's likely, in spite of new family connections, that Caesar's parents

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 19

lacked the money needed for a home on the fashionable Palatine Hill. Since Caesar lived in his family house in the Subura for over thirty years, he must have gained a familiarity with the rough-and-tumble life of the Roman streets that few of his upper-class peers could have known. His later populist politics may in fact be due to his childhood friends and surroundings as much as political opportunism. Whatever the reasons for his family's long residence in the grimy Subura, it created in Caesar a unique individual—a patrician descendant of kings who knew intimately the lives and sorrows of common Romans.

Caesar probably grew up in a small home squeezed between the butcher shops and taverns of the Subura. Excavations from Roman towns like Pompeii provide a vivid picture of similar urban residences. Like many homes in Rome still today, an ancient Roman house faced inward, presenting only a wooden door to the street. The lower floor of a home usually had small shops on the street level, unconnected to the rest of the house, that were rented to all manner of businesses. Visitors to Caesar's childhood home would have been greeted by a slave at the front door and guided through the adjoining *vestibulum* or vestibule, where cloaks and boots would be stored. A slave would also wash the feet of any guest since Roman streets were dusty and full of animal droppings. In the center of the home an atrium opened to the sky, often with a small fish pond in the center. Around the atrium were rooms for cooking, sleeping, and storage. Bodily functions were handled by chamber pots that would be emptied by slaves into a nearby public latrine. Upper rooms of urban houses would often be leased as apartments to local residents. Everything from sausage on fresh-baked bread to exotic perfumes from Arabia would have been available just a few steps from Caesar's door. The young Caesar must have grown up surrounded by a multitude of glorious smells and sounds. Besides Latin, he would have heard Greek, Aramaic, Gaulish, Coptic, and a dozen other languages spoken by the slaves, shopkeepers, and residents of the Subura.

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 20

Religion would be an important part of Caesar's life, but worship among the ancient Romans was vastly different from most traditions of the modern western world. Like so much else in Roman life, religion was centered on the household. The Romans acknowledged the *numina* (spirits) that existed in the home and fields, but these divine forces were never fully understood. The *lares* and *penates* were spirits of the home who watched over the members of the household. They were mostly benevolent, but could cause harm if angered or ignored. Every Roman home held a small cupboard with their sacred images, and they were honored with a small portion of the family meal. Vesta was the spirit of the hearth, Janus guarded the door, Jupiter controlled rain for the fields, and Mars brought forth the plants of the earth. Unlike most modern religions, what a person *believed* about the divine forces of the Roman world was irrelevant. There were no creeds or professions of faith—it was a person's actions toward the gods that mattered. The favor of the gods could be gained by a libation of wine or the sacrifice of an animal. In return, the gods would grant a respectful Roman his due rewards. It was very businesslike and not at all based on emotion. *Do ut des,* as the Romans themselves said—"I give so that you (the god) might give back." The Romans, in fact, were suspicious of emotional religious worship, especially in those religions imported from the eastern Mediterranean.

Roman state religion grew out of household worship. The temples that were built, while borrowing their architectural form from the Etruscans and Greeks, functioned essentially as large household shrines. The city borrowed household spirits for itself and turned them into state divinities. Mars left behind his agricultural roots and became a god of war; Janus watched over the gates of the city; Jupiter became high god of the thundering sky; and a temple of Vesta was built in the Forum to house the eternal hearth fire of the city.

The different priestly offices had their origin deep in Roman his-

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 21

tory. Augurs were charged with learning the will of the gods by interpreting divine signs, both at Rome and on the battlefield. Fifteen flamens were appointed to serve particular gods, most important of which were the *flamen dialis* (Jupiter), the *flamen martialis* (Mars), and the *flamen quirinalis* (Quirinus, later identified with Romulus). Only the nobility could serve in these highest offices, though lesser posts could be held by commoners. All the flamens were forbidden to participate in politics, though the other priestly college, the *pontifices* (singular *pontifex*), could serve the state in peace or war. This small group of priests decided festival days and supervised state religious practices. The *pontifex maximus* was the leader of the religious orders, including the Vestal Virgins. His title, which means "chief bridge builder," was adopted in the Christian era by the pope. Caesar would serve as both flamen dialis and pontifex maximus in his lifetime.

The six Vestal Virgins were chosen originally from noble families to serve the goddess Vesta chastely for a period of thirty years. They were free to marry when their term was finished, but few did. Their primary tasks were to tend the sacred fire in Vesta's temple and to bake special cakes for religious festivals. Their temple contained no statue of Vesta, only a few holy objects such as—oddly enough—the image of an erect phallus. The Vestals were highly honored for their purity and service, but they were not secluded from Roman society. They could leave their temple and even attend parties, but woe to the Vestal who lost her virginity. If her guilt were proven through a discreet examination by trusted Roman matrons, the guilty Vestal would be buried alive.

With Caesar's father away from home much of the time, Aurelia was the primary influence in her son's life. It was his mother who oversaw Caesar's upbringing and education, in addition to her responsibilities managing household affairs, supervising slaves, and handling

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 22

squabbles with neighbors. Life for a woman in Rome was not as restrictive as that of her counterparts in ancient Greece. In the Athens of Plato's day, women were secluded in the back of the house and rarely left, but not so in Rome. The streets were full of Roman wives bustling about shopping and visiting with friends. Women routinely attended theaters and public games, even the law courts if they wished. Poorer women labored as hard as their husbands in shops and on farms, but wealthy women were rarely pampered. They were well educated and ran the complex affairs of the home while speaking their minds freely to their husbands. The Greeks might have a *symposium* at which only males dined and conversed, but this was foreign to Roman culture where women ate and mingled freely with men.

Women normally married in their late teens to men older than themselves. The ceremony was simple but joyful. A groom arrived at his bride's house and took her right hand to speak his brief vows. A pig was sacrificed, then the guests shouted, *Feliciter!* ("Good luck!") followed by a feast. The marriage was consummated when the husband carried his new bride over the threshold of their new home to avoid the ill omen of stumbling. By the late Republic, it seems that some men were hesitant to shoulder this burden. In 131 B.C., the censor Metellus Macedonius delivered a speech to the Senate that expressed the attitude of many potential grooms:

> *Fellow Romans, if we could make do without a wife, we would all be free of such a nuisance. But nature has ordained that we can't live easily with women or without them, so we must look to our long term needs rather than our short-term happiness.*

But as the primary goal of marriage was the production of children and the continuance of the family name, most Roman men eventually chose a wife. Indeed, we have every reason to think that the majority of Roman marriages were rich in love. The tombstones of

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 23

wives from Roman cemeteries, while certainly formulaic to a degree, often speak movingly of a husband's sorrow and loss. But in spite of this, divorce and remarriage for financial or political reasons were frequent among the Roman upper classes, though Caesar's parents remained together until his father's death.

When Caesar was about nine days old, a *lustratio* (purification) ceremony signaled his formal entry into the family. Roman fathers had the right to reject any child they thought unfit, but the law required they raise all healthy boys and at least the firstborn girl. Deformed or illegitimate children would be quietly left to die. These rules and customs should not, however, lead us to believe that Romans didn't love and value children. Most families longed for many offspring and often adopted unwanted boys or girls. If nothing else, the factors of high infant mortality and the lack of a social welfare system to care for the aged placed a premium on having a home full of children. Aurelia's family of only one son and two daughters was in fact unusually small.

Caesar would have been raised in a household of women both free and slave to look after him. Corporal punishment was frequent, but the life of a Roman child could be plenty of fun. Archaeology and surviving artworks show us that Roman children had many toys similar to modern boys and girls. Babies and toddlers played with bells and wooden animals full of pebbles to make them rattle. Caesar's sisters would have had cloth dolls and doll houses full of miniature furniture. Caesar himself would have played with stuffed animals, spinning tops, toy chariots, balls, hoops, board games, and joined in with neighborhood children on swings and seesaws.

Since there was no concept of public education in classical times, Roman children attended either private schools or studied at home with individual tutors. Whatever the setting, Roman education in Caesar's day followed a pattern borrowed from the Greeks. At about the age of seven, children began instruction with a *ludi magister* (schoolmaster) who taught the basics of Greek and Latin grammar,

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 24

writing, and mathematics. Elementary schoolmasters were often freed slaves who set up shop in a marketplace or in the back of a store. Such schools must have been common in the Subura, but Caesar and his sisters were educated by private tutors at home. Less fortunate Roman boys and girls would march to school at sunrise to begin their lessons. Since paper would not reach the west for centuries and papyrus from Egypt was too expensive, each child would carry a small rectangular piece of wood indented in the center to hold a writing surface of wax. Students could then practice writing sentences or math problems with the point of a wooden stylus, then erase them with the blunted end. Children were expected to work very hard, while teachers maintained strict discipline with their whipping canes.

At about the age of twelve, students moved on to a *grammaticus* who continued their instruction in literature and especially poetry. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer were favorites, but pupils also studied early Latin poetry by masters such as Ennius and Livius Andronicus. When a boy reached adulthood at about the age of fifteen or sixteen, he could move to the third stage of Roman education with a teacher of rhetoric. The art of public speaking was vital in an age before printing, when any young man with hopes of a public career was expected to speak well before assemblies and courts. Students would study speeches from the past, then compose their own to address real or imagined situations. The art of rhetoric was subtle and intricate, emphasizing proper delivery, structure, and use of evidence—all without notes. A favorite assignment was to compose a persuasive speech in a historical situation, such as taking the role of Hannibal addressing his troops before crossing the Alps. Thorny legal cases were also common—a man has seduced two virgins in one night. One wants to marry him, but the other justly seeks his death. What do you say to the jury?

Caesar's education would have followed this same pattern even at home. We know that his parents employed a skilled tutor named Marcus Antonius Gnipho, who had been trained in Alexandria,

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 25

Egypt, and was highly proficient in both Greek and Latin rhetoric. Like other students, Caesar memorized huge amounts of literature, including the ancient Twelve Tables laying out the basis of Roman law. Records even survive of Caesar's own youthful compositions, though the writings themselves were suppressed by the emperor Augustus for unknown reasons. They include a speech praising Hercules, a tragedy based on the Oedipus story, and a collection of witty proverbs. The one surviving fragment of Caesar's poetry may also date from this period. These six lines comparing the early Roman comic playwright Terence to the famed Greek writer Menander are hardly inspiring and may well have been a simple school exercise, but they suggest an abiding interest in verse that remained with Caesar the rest of his life:

> *You also, you half-Menander, are ranked among the greatest poets,*
> *and rightly so, you lover of pure speech.*
> *But how I wish your beautiful verse held force as well as form,*
> *that we might honor your comic lines as highly as the Greeks*
> *and that you might not suffer scorn because of this weakness.*
> *O Terence, I mourn this missing piece in your genius.*

Physical education was also a key component of Caesar's training, but not in the same manner as Greek youth. Young Athenians practiced sporting events at a *gymnasion* ("naked place"), but Romans viewed this as indulgent, favoring instead a more practical training for the rigors of war. Roman students learned to fight, ride a horse, and swim in the Tiber—a skill that would one day save Caesar's life in Egypt. We know that Caesar became an expert at horsemanship in his youth, galloping bareback while holding his hands behind his back.

Caesar's boyhood years were a time of turmoil unlike anything Rome had ever known. The Italian allies of Rome who had fought

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 26

bravely and spilled their blood during the wars against Rome's enemies had finally had enough. After so many years of loyal service with little appreciation in return, they began to organize a massive rebellion that threatened to destroy Roman power forever. Some statesmen saw the danger coming and tried to head it off before Italy exploded into a full-fledged civil war. Marcus Livius Drusus, whose father had been a leading opponent of reform, surprised everyone by championing a campaign to grant citizenship to the Italian allies beginning in 91 B.C., when Caesar was nine years old. The leading voices of the Senate, following their true form, staunchly opposed any change to the status quo and soon had Drusus murdered.

To the Italians, the death of their advocate Drusus was the final straw. The fearless Marsi tribesmen led the resistance in the central part of the peninsula, while the Samnites rose up in the mountains of the south. The resulting conflict was eerily similar to the American Civil War. Like all civil wars it was particularly mean and nasty, but the Italians of the south were blessed with brilliant generals and tens of thousands of troops well trained in Roman-style warfare. The Senate at first scoffed at the fighting ability of the backwoods Samnites and Marsi, but the Italians scored numerous early successes against the Romans, such as the capture of Pompeii and other towns around the Bay of Naples. The Senate deliberately overlooked Caesar's uncle Marius, who had famously saved Italy from German invaders a decade earlier, and instead gave control of the army to lesser men—who promptly lost—until it finally chose Marius's former lieutenant Sulla to take command in the southern theater. A sign of how badly affairs were going for Rome was a bill passed in 89 B.C. granting citizenship to all Italians who laid down their arms against Rome—the very thing the rebels had wanted in the first place. But the Italians quickly realized their new voting power would be nullified by Roman politics, so that in the end the proposal caused more animosity than goodwill. At last, a Roman nobleman named Pompeius Strabo (father of Caesar's future ally and adversary Pompey)

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 27

led a fierce campaign against the rebels in central Italy and swept across the peninsula to the Adriatic like Sherman in his march to the sea. By 88 B.C., Sulla, through attrition, slaughter, and sheer doggedness, finally defeated the Italians. Peace was restored, the rebels were soon welcomed back into the fold, and within a few years they had gained full citizenship rights—making the Italian War one of the most wasteful and pointless conflicts in Roman history.

As difficult as Roman relations were with her Italian allies, the internal fighting at Rome during Caesar's childhood was even more violent and destructive. As soon as the Italian War was over, the Senate appointed Sulla to lead a campaign against Mithridates of Pontus in Asia Minor, who had managed to create a Black Sea empire and was now threatening Roman power and fortunes in the East. Taking advantage of the chaos caused by the war in Italy, Mithridates swept through the Roman province of Asia and ordered a massacre of some 80,000 Roman and Italian residents. The residents of Asia, who had been bled dry by Roman tax collectors for years, shed no tears for the victims. Mithridates swiftly crossed to Greece and proclaimed himself liberator and defender of the Hellenic world against the barbaric Romans. But at this time when Rome needed to stand united, a new tribune, Sulpicius Rufus, instead used his bully boys in the Forum to bash heads and forced the Senate to replace Sulla with Marius. Sulla decided he had played by the rules long enough and was not about to let his chance for advancement be seized by his former commander. Rushing to the camp of his former soldiers near Naples, he roused them to march on Rome. For the first time in Roman history, a Roman general seized the city. Marius was caught off guard and fled to Africa, condemned by Sulla as an outlaw. Sulla shored up his senatorial base in Rome and regained his command, then quickly marched east against Mithridates.

But Sulla had established a dangerous precedent. After he was gone, the consul Cornelius Cinna repudiated him and led another army of discontents against Rome, this time joined by Marius. The

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 28

Senate called on Pompeius Strabo to save them, but Pompey's father dithered and was soon dead of natural causes. In 87 B.C., Rome surrendered to Cinna and Marius, hoping for the best. Instead, they discovered the worst in Caesar's uncle. Marius led a vendetta against the Roman aristocracy fed by decades of ill-treatment at their hands. Leading senators were hunted down by the gangs of Marius like criminals, murdered in cold blood, and their heads displayed on pikes in the Forum. Rome had never seen such a vicious blood bath: "They tossed headless bodies into the streets . . . butchered fathers in their own homes, mutilated children, and violated their mothers."

The rage of Marius eventually drove even Cinna to despair, and the consul ordered his own disciplined troops to cut down Marius's thugs. Fortunately for Rome, Marius died in his bed soon afterward at the age of seventy. It was a sorry end for a man who had done so much for his country in years past. Cinna took over as leader in Rome and tried to make a new beginning for the state. He passed legislation to aid new citizens, stabilize the economy, and relieve the crushing private debts that had built up since the Italian War. A measure of peace descended on Rome for a few years, but everyone knew Sulla would soon be returning with a victorious army behind him.

During the brief years of Cinna's rule before the return of Sulla from the East, young Julius Caesar came of age and began his public life. One of the victims of the purge by Cinna and Marius had been Cornelius Merula, the *flamen dialis* or priest of Jupiter. This left Rome without one of its most important priests, but few men were able or willing to serve as *flamen dialis*. The office was still restricted to patricians and was surrounded by a host of onerous taboos with their origins lost deep in Roman history. The *flamen dialis* served for life and could not leave the city of Rome for more than a few days. The feet of his bed had to be covered in mud and he had to wear a pointed cap

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 29

at all times. He was exempt from oaths and was allowed to sit in the Senate, but he could not wear knots anywhere on his clothing, could never see a corpse, and was not allowed to ride a horse. He also had to be married to a patrician bride who had her own sacred responsibilities and restrictions. Unlike other Roman relationships, the marriage between the *flamen dialis* and his wife was binding as long as both lived.

Where could the Roman leaders find a qualified person willing to take on a job that effectively barred him from public life and burdened him with a hundred arcane and tiresome taboos? It was then that Cinna remembered the nephew of Marius. Caesar was a patrician of the noblest blood and, best of all, he was not old enough to object or cause any trouble. We don't know how Caesar reacted when he was told his fate, but he couldn't have been happy. Any dreams he had of military glory and a political career were now shattered. His life would be spent performing archaic rituals and burdensome priestly chores.

Caesar's family had previously arranged an excellent marriage for him to a girl named Cossutia from a wealthy family. However, since Cossutia was not a patrician, she could not be the wife of the *flamen dialis*. Instead, he became engaged to none other than Cinna's patrician daughter Cornelia. Caesar's marriage to Cornelia grew into a loving relationship, but it also tied Caesar firmly to the populist politics of his father-in-law. Caesar and his family surely realized that if Sulla returned to Rome and overthrew Cinna, the young priest's life would be in grave danger.

Before Caesar could marry or take on his religious duties, he had to enter the adult world of ancient Rome by laying aside the simple tunic of childhood and putting on the *toga virilis* ("toga of manhood"). Thus, around his sixteenth birthday, Caesar dedicated his childhood toys to the gods and took up the burden of full citizenship. It was an eventful year for young Caesar. At about the same time, his father died, leaving Caesar as the head of his household. One day

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 30

Caesar was a child studying Greek poetry at home with his tutor, then practically overnight he was a married man attending the Senate as high priest of Jupiter.

While Cinna ruled in Rome, Sulla fought against Mithridates in the East. Sulla arrived in Greece in 87 B.C. and captured Athens the next year. He then led his army north into Macedonia and across the Bosporus strait into Asia. Mithridates soon realized it was best to cut his losses and negotiated a peace treaty with Sulla near Troy. The king agreed to stay out of Roman territory, surrender his fleet, and pay a hefty indemnity. Rome then acknowledged his legitimate rule over Pontus and enrolled him as an ally. Sulla could have stormed Pontus and destroyed Mithridates, but it would have been a long, hard fight with the loss of many of his men. He knew he would need those soldiers when he returned to Italy to take on Cinna, so he cut a quick deal with Mithridates and headed west.

Cinna tried to raise a defensive army, but was killed by his own mutinous soldiers. Sulla landed unopposed at Brundisium in the heel of Italy in 83 B.C. Those senators and members of the aristocracy who had survived the purge of Marius flocked to join him there. Among these supporters was Marcus Lucinius Crassus, about thirty years old, whose father and older brother had been victims of Marius. Young Pompey, son of Pompeius Strabo, also joined Sulla, bringing with him three legions he had raised from his father's veteran soldiers in Picenum. Watching events unfold, little did seventeen-year-old Caesar know that one day these two men—Crassus and Pompey—would be his partners in ruling Rome.

Sulla marched freely into Campania and defeated one army sent against him, while the other he simply bribed away from its commander. A son of Marius rallied some of his father's old supporters against Sulla, but was blockaded inside the Latin town of Praeneste near Rome. The populist followers (the *populares*) of Marius and Cinna knew their cause was lost and so withdrew from the capital city, but not before carrying out a massacre of their enemies who had

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 31

been foolish enough to stay in town. Sulla seized Rome for the second time and soon defeated the remnants of the Marian forces in Italy and Spain. Sulla was now the undisputed master of the Roman world—a king in all but name.

The bloodbath that followed made the previous political killings of Marius look mild by comparison. Sulla devised a simple system for disposing of his enemies—he posted a list of names in the Forum of all those he wanted dead. Anyone who killed them would receive a generous bounty while the state would seize the dead men's property. By these so-called proscriptions, Sulla managed to combine murder and fund-raising on a grand scale. Several thousand of Sulla's enemies died in this way, including reformist senators, but the business class that had supported Cinna and Marius was especially hard hit. Many who had little involvement in politics were placed on the proscription lists simply because they were rich. Sulla also passed a law that the son of any proscribed man was ineligible to ever hold public office. Beyond Rome, Sulla seized the Italian lands of his enemies to distribute to his loyal soldiers.

Sulla was determined to restore the preeminence of the Senate at the expense of the common people. To carry out this plan, he first had himself appointed dictator. He then increased the number of senators and passed restrictions on the plebeian magistrates. He also changed the composition of jury courts to favor the senatorial class and made northern Italy into a province so that Roman troops could be stationed there permanently, close to the capital city in case they were needed.

Among Sulla's reforms was a housecleaning of Cinna's appointees, including Caesar as *flamen dialis*. Doubtless, Caesar was relieved to be free of this burden, but he was still in danger as a nephew of Marius and son-in-law of Cinna. Sulla, however, was uncharacteristically merciful to young Caesar and merely demanded that he divorce Cinna's daughter Cornelia. Sulla had commanded several of his own followers, including Pompey, to put aside their wives because of inimical family connections, and all had promptly complied.

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 32

It was a very reasonable order given the circumstances, and everyone naturally assumed Caesar would do as he was told. But Caesar looked Sulla in the eye and refused. Sulla and his followers were stunned. Whether out of stubbornness, audacity, or simply love, Caesar was defying a man who had ordered the murder of thousands. In doing so, he lost everything he owned, and was now marked for death on the proscription lists. The tale of defiance against Sulla is one of the earliest episodes that survive about Caesar's life, but it tells us volumes about his character.

Caesar was brave, but he was not foolish enough to remain in Rome to die. He fled immediately to the mountainous Sabine country of southern Italy and went into hiding. Almost every night he moved to a new location to avoid Sulla's agents who were sweeping the countryside. The life of a fugitive was made infinitely more difficult as Caesar had contracted malaria and was suffering from anemia, fevers, and exhaustion. Finally one night, struggling to a new hiding place, Caesar was intercepted by a henchman of Sulla named Cornelius. Caesar was forced to hand over the equivalent of thousands of dollars—surely everything he had—to bribe his way to freedom. He was now a penniless, deathly ill refugee still with a price on his head, wandering the hills and valleys of Italy, but he would not give up. Fortunately for Caesar, he had friends and powerful advocates in Rome. Several of the Vestal Virgins came forward to plead with Sulla on Caesar's behalf, as did his mother's cousin Aurelius Cotta and Sulla's staunch supporter Mamercus Lepidus. They repeatedly beseeched Sulla to spare Caesar's life and allow him to return to Rome. At last Sulla gave way, perhaps with a sneaking admiration for the young man who had dared to stand up to him. But Sulla then prophetically declared:

> *Remember—this young man who you have been so desperate to save will one day destroy the aristocracy you have worked with me to preserve. For in this Caesar I see many a Marius.*

Freeman_CaesarCV_i-viii,1-408_Final 2/26/09 7:43 PM Page 33

Caesar was reunited with Cornelia, but it seemed the better part of valor to quickly absent himself from Sulla's Rome. He decided to make up for lost time by beginning his military career at the age of nineteen on the staff of the propraetor of Roman Asia, Marcus Thermus. At that time Thermus was besieging the Greek town of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, the last stubborn holdout inspired by Mithridates' rebellion against Rome. Thermus ordered Caesar to travel to the kingdom of Bithynia in northern Asia Minor to bring back ships for the siege. Bithynia was an ally of Rome and its reluctant king, Nicomedes, was obliged to offer what little assistance he could to the Roman military effort. Caesar was successful in obtaining a fleet—perhaps too successful—because rumors quickly grew that he had become the lover of Nicomedes during his visit. Caesar vociferously denied these charges, but they haunted him for the rest of his life.

Homosexuality in the classical world was viewed differently than in most modern societies. Greeks and Romans didn't really care what a man did in bed with a subordinate woman or man. The shame was not engaging in homosexual behavior, but in allowing oneself to be at the receiving end of such a partnership. Roman men might purchase male slaves for the specific purpose of serving as sexual servants, and as long as it wasn't trumpeted in the streets, people would consider it a private matter. But for a free adult male to allow himself to be used as the target of sexual actions by another man was unthinkable. Caesar could laugh off an insult better than most Romans, but he was furious when his political enemies later dragged up the charge of a youthful affair with Nicomedes. The accusation even became part of bawdy songs his soldiers sang in parade years later on their victorious return from Gaul: "Caesar conquered Gaul, but Nicomedes conquered Caesar."

His foes labeled him the "Queen of Bithynia" and called Nicomedes his *paedicator*—indicating that Caesar was his sexual subordinate. The fact that Caesar swore under oath that these charges were un-