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School: #  
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Age 14

Gaius Felix of Carthage in the reign of the emperor Hadrian

[http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/bigpic.cgi?img=coins/./ric/hadrian/RIC\\_0315.jpg&rule=./ric/hadrian/i.html](http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/bigpic.cgi?img=coins/./ric/hadrian/RIC_0315.jpg&rule=./ric/hadrian/i.html)

“Land!” The shout was taken with joy from the whole crew as the ship's boy climbed down from his post in the crow's nest. He threw the scope down to his mates and then jumped down on to the deck. They all received him with claps on the back. I sighed. Finally we had reached the port of Ostia. I had begun to feel afraid that the captain had taken a longer route, insuring that I reached the city of Rome past my deadline and that I would be deported, but it seemed we had made it in time.

“Eh Gaius!” I turned to my only friend on the trip, Lucius, a fellow trader like me. Unlike me he did not get to stop at Rome, Lucius would have to go on to trade with Britain. I nodded at him as he reached me. He leaned on the rail next to me and grinned. “Don't you think you want to take up a safer trade cargo Gaius? I dare say, trading that wheat is quite dangerous. Imagine if the ship crew's fingers had accidentally... slipped?” he said in a teasing voice and then laughed from the look on my face.

“Very Funny Lucius.” He grinned. “No, I think wheat is fine, I've managed to live so far, besides I get taken care of nicely. So how's trade with Britain?” I asked. Lucius smiled.

“Just great, just great...” Just then the ship hit up against something. We both turned to see it was the port, the ship was being tied up, and we were getting ready to unload. Lucius and I clapped each other on the back in form of goodbye. “Good Luck Gaius mate.” I nodded.

“Same to you Lucius may our paths cross again.” I walked over to my carts of wheat and helped unload them. After that, a few of the mid-ship men helped to load them onto the waiting cart. Lucius waved from the deck. I smiled at him and turned to go, but before I could even move a highly excited voice shouted my name.

“Gaius!” I turned to see none other than my little cousin Aemilia, her long red hair streaming out behind her, running towards me from one of the nearby shops. I held my arms open and she jumped into them, her arms flung around my neck as she hugged me tight. I buried my face in her hair, happy to see my favorite cousin safe. “Gaius, I've been waiting for days for you to trade in Rome, I've gone every day to visit the ships that come from Carthage, I was afraid I had already bypassed you.” She said as she looked up and then reached her hand out to ruffle my curly brown hair. She studied me, from my darkening hair to my newly sun tanned skin and added height.

“You've grown too tall Gaius” she pouted, “Now you actually look seventeen, I liked it better when everyone thought we were both thirteen year old twins.” I laughed and ruffled her hair.

“You're still my favorite cousin” she smiled. “And I would still appreciate it if you rode with me on trading business as my apprentice.” She smiled even harder at this. Before we could even set off, I was once again delayed, this time an old woman stood next to the cart. “Yes?” I asked her politely.

She looked up at me with pleading and tired eyes, and held out a coin. “Please sir, trade me some of your grain, my children...they are very hungry.” She wiped her hand across her face, to get rid of what, who knows, her whole self was bathed in filth. Aemilia leaned forward with curiosity to see what I would do. I leaned forward to take

the coin from the women's hand, it sickened me to see old women full of pride they mustered what little they could.

"How much do you want?" I asked as I studied the coin, Aemelia edged closer to look at the coin, knowing my interest for collecting coins. I looked up at the women, waiting for her response.

"How much can you give me?" I looked back at the amount inside the cart, it was completely full, and a few armfuls wouldn't be missed. I handed the coin to Aemelia and turned around to grab an armful, as I did so, the grain seemed to rustle a bit, but that must have been my tired eyes seeing things. Then I turned and handed it to the old women. She looked at me with shinning eyes. "May god be with you young man" she whispered, as she took the load. I smiled.

"Best wishes to you too" I answered and she was on her way. I turned back to the road and finally pushed the mules into a nice walk. Aemelia handed the coin to me and smiled. She then sat back, I pocketed the coin. But she snatched it from my pocket and held it up to the light.

"How fitting" she murmured grinning. I looked at her sideways. She caught my curious stare. "It shows our Emperor Hadrian, and his ADVENTVI AFRICAE. You are from "Africae" Gaius." I snorted; she spoke to me as if I didn't know my own birthplace, Carthage, was located in Africa. She slipped the coin back into my pocket. "Keep it with you Gaius; it just might end up being useful to you for something other than trade." With that she leaned against me and fell asleep. I carefully laid her back against the grain.

Then I reached into my pocket to examine the coin more closely. True enough it showed our emperor Hadrian bearing a scroll in one hand towards our, Africa's, lady. Africa stood in an elephant skin headdress with animals around and in a sacrifice position. Aemelia was right, it could help me to cross safely across the city of Rome, seeing as I was treading across land that had not so long ago been Carthage's enemy.

I rode the rest of the way in thought. Finally we arrived at one of Ostia's trading posts. I shook Aemelia awake. She groggily sat up and went with me inside the post. It was a small room with various doors that obviously seemed to lead to storage rooms. Two soldiers sat with papers at one desk, there were a few other traders that sat on the floor, waiting for cargo to take back. One of the soldiers motioned us forward. One was tall and lean, very much my age with yellow hair and tan skinned. The other was a bit older, with rough hands, red hair, and a bored look on his face. Aemelia strutted up to announce the cargo, as a real apprentice would.

"Gaius Felix of Carthage and apprentice Aemelia Tarnia of Rome trading grain from Carthage to Rome." She announced quite proudly. The younger man laughed at her serious face. Aemelia scowled. The older man elbowed the younger and nodded at Aemelia. I stepped forward beside my little cousin.

"Have you smuggled any runaways Mr. Felix?" asked the older man. I looked at him in surprise and managed to shake my head no. "Very well, Armandis, help the two unload the grain and bring it into storage three." The younger man got up and followed Aemelia and I out to the cart. We each began to take armfuls and bring them back into the storage indicated. Before we could get very far, a dark haired head popped up from the grain. It was my turn for the armful and I stood there staring at the girl who had been hiding in my cargo. She had dark eyes that were red and sunken from lack of sleep and short dark hair full of the wheat.

She used the element of surprise on me and bolted out of the cart, knocking me over. To my surprise, Armandis was just coming out and he quickly caught her and pinned her to the wall. "Guards!" He shouted. Instantly two other roman soldiers showed themselves and took the struggling girl from Armandis's grip. They dragged her inside the post; I followed Armandis and them inside. Aemelia came to stand next to me looking quite surprised. Then Armandis spoke up.

"This girl was caught inside the grain cargo, hitching a free ride." Armandis said. "Who knows how much she soiled the grain." The girl opened her mouth in her defense but the older man spoke first, holding up his hand indicating that no one speak.

"You know nothing of this?" The man asked turning to Aemelia and I. I opened my mouth in disbelief. How could he think I knew about this? I could lose my job if I so much as dirtied the grain and hid someone in it. Aemelia answered for me.

"No, I assure you we knew not of this sir. I was with him the whole trip, we never saw anyone get in." She stated calmly. And then I remembered that small rustle of the grain. There was no way she could have gotten in the cart in Rome, and then I realized, she could have easily boarded the ship and snuck her way in. The man turned to the girl.

"Your name, city, and defense girl!" The man hollered at her. She held her dirty face up proudly, as if she were facing a whole army.

"Tae Sabina of Carthage (I gasped) I got on that cart thing because I was merely tired and looking for a place to sleep, I didn't expect to travel all the way to Rome. I ask only that I may be able to return home." She saw the angry look in the man's eyes and she knew she had gone too far in asking to get off so easy. The older man began to shout.

"You filthy African! You soil our grains and take an easy ride to Rome and you dare to ask to be safely returned without punishment?! No African shall get off easy here in Rome Miss. Tae Sabina!" Aemelia opened her mouth to remind them that I too was from Carthage and therefore African, but the older man spoke again. "Take her to the prison; we'll deal with her later." Just then I remembered the coin, the one where our Emperor Hadrian, is standing in peace next to Africa. I dug the coin out of my pocket, motioned for Aemelia to retain Armandis and the girl and ran to the man and slapped the coin onto the desk. The looked down at the coin disinterested.

"What do you want to buy?" I shook my head at him and pointed for him to look closer. He did and sure enough his eyes went wide as he saw Hadrian and Africa standing together. "Wait!" he yelled. "Release the girl." Armandis did so and Tae fell to the floor. "To maintain peace with Carthage, this girl shall be released to return with this boy, back to her homeland, if we ever catch her back here again, it's prison for both Mr. Felix and Miss. Sabina. Understand?" Every one in the room nodded. "Very well, Mr. Felix you can pick up your next cargo in the city of Narbo." I nodded my understanding, quickly took back the coin and rushed Tae and Aemelia back to the cart.

"Now what am I going to do with two apprentices?" I asked out loud. Aemelia grinned. She carefully guided the exhaustedly grateful Tae into the cart.

"I dare say you'll manage. You could end up getting more apprentices Gaius if you get more coins." She grinned.

"Very Funny." I muttered as I rolled my eyes and we began to ride to Narbo.

"But see, I told you that coin could be useful for something other than buy and sell." And with that, she leaned up against the cart and fell asleep.

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