

From the personal memoirs of Gaius Marcus Tactitus, legionary of the 3rd Cohort of the
Praetorian Guard.

January 24, 41 A.D.

It is midnight. The full moon is casting a chilling shadow across our tent. My buddy, Maximus, is sleeping. How he can do this, I will never know. He sleeps through anything, even wake up call. He is lucky that I wake him up, or O’l Battleaxe would have his hide. I guess war does that to a man, especially now, in the turmoil of Rome. But I can’t sleep, not tonight.

I have all my armor laid out, ready to put on at dawn, my sword is sharp, my dagger honed to a razor edge. I’m still in my tunic. Ever since I wandered into that tent, looking for Cassius, I’ve not had a good night’s sleep. The only reason I left that tent alive is that Cassius made me swear to join them in their... *assassination*. There, I’ve said it, if I’m executed, at least people will know that I had no choice.

Yes, we’re planning to assassinate the Emperor. Emperor, bah, more like god. The people worshiped him in the first year of his reign, but not anymore. Not after the sickness. He was a passing fair Emperor at first, but then he changed. I think the fever left him mad. Shortly after recovering from his illness, the Emperor had several loyal individuals killed who had promised their lives for his in case of his recovery. He next had his wife banished and his father-in-law, Marcus Silanus, and his cousin, Tiberius Gemellus, were forced to commit suicide. He even had Naevius Sutorius Macro, our own Captain, killed. He is the one to whom he owed the throne. If it wasn’t for Macro, our dear Lord Caligula wouldn’t have lasted a day with Tiberius. No, I don’t care if such a man lives or dies. I just serve the current emperor and get my pay.

The final preparations are made, the plans are laid; there’s no going back, not now. Cassius took me aside and told me that I didn’t have to actually stab the Emperor, just be there. Ha, fool, anyone within 100 feet of the Emperor tomorrow will be dead once the Emperor’s beloved Germans get loose. But I’ll stick this through to the end; let no one say that Gaius Marcus Tactitus ever held back in a fight and let his brothers go to their heroic deaths. My palms are sweaty with a deep fear twisting my gut, I don’t know if I could run; my legs feel like soft dough. I’ve seen too many fights to think that I can fight my way out. Once the battle between Praetorians and Germans breaks out, the chaos and dust, the noise, the fear, I’m just as likely to be killed by a Praetorian as I am likely to be killed by a German.

Our plan is relatively simple, during the Emperor's games and dramatics held for the Divine Augustus, we'll go up to him, no more than ten of us, the rest hidden among the crowds, and Cassius will stab him, the rest of us will escort Cassius away and that's that. *Idiots*. First of all, ten Praetorians and the man with the most reason to hate Caligula getting into killing range is impossible. But let's pretend they *do* get to him. Hey, let's even say Cassius actually *kills* him. Then what? Surrounded by a crowd, Germans gone crazy, elite Praetorians all killing each other. That's like death on a gilded platter.

I suppose if he wasn't crazy, he might have made a good emperor. But I guess that's the gods' way. Speaking of gods, the man thinks he's Jupiter. On several occasions, he's been publicly referred to as Jupiter, he's even had two temples erected so that the people can worship him. I was on duty at the Senate when he tried to get his horse elected. He even had a pontoon bridge built stretching for over two miles from the resort of Baiae to the neighboring port of Puteoli. He then proceeded to cross it, while riding his favorite horse and wearing the breastplate of Alexander the Great. I guess this was in defiance of Tiberius' old soothsayer's prediction that he had "no more chance of becoming emperor than of riding a horse across the Bay of Baiae."

He did some good things, finishing the Temple of Augustus, the Theater of Pompey, and expanding the Imperial Palace. Away at Syracuse, he repaired walls and the temples. He is also building aqueducts, Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus. He built a large racetrack called "The circus of Gaius and Nero" and had an obelisk from faraway Egypt transported to Rome by ships and erected in the middle of it. He is planning to rebuild the palace at Samos, to finish the temples and to found a city high up in the Northern Mountains. He also is planning to dig a canal in Greece. He had new roads built and is pushing to keep roads in good condition. So I guess History might look kindly on him.

But alas for Mother Rome, she is not the same as she was when a naïve young lad of 17 joined the Praetorian Guard. She was something that all we country lads looked up to; would die for. However, as the years go by I find that sadly, our walls are stained with sin and debauchery, one dares not even go out in the streets without a sword. Perhaps it is the anger of the gods. Who can tell? I think that this conspiracy will fail, however, I am sworn to it. Though some in the Senate support it, I will not state who, I think it is mainly the egos of the assassins, being insulted night after night, mocked, laughed at, by our Lord Caesar. I too will join, however because of the insanity and the filth in Mother Rome, perhaps a new Emperor will bring back the glory and power of Rome. Rome, the very name used to make barbarians tremble in fear, I-

((Here the entry is broken off, then started up again.))

The officers came to my tent and took me to Cassius'. There we went over the plan once more. Then we solemnly swore to uphold the laws of Rome, and to do what free men must. I swore with a clean conscience, as I firmly believe now that I must do this thing because of and for Rome. We are Praetorians, the Elite of Rome, finest in the Empire, and we will do what other men fear to think. *Long Live Mother Rome!*

-Gaius Marcus Tactitus, legionary of the 3rd cohort of the Praetorian Guard.

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