

School #7801  
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Age 11

## XL A.D. Caligula and I

Neeigh! I am confused. I am being taken to the emperor. What is his name? Caligula I believe. Have I displeased him? I think not. He raises his hand for the crowd to hush and they do just that. He speaks suddenly in a loud and deep voice saying, "I, Emperor Caligula in this year XL A.D. officially name Incitatus, my beloved and most trusted horse, a consul of Rome!" I'd bet you all my apples, he's a total hay barrel (in other words, he's crazy).

Let me start at the beginning, when Caligula's mother first bought me. I was a young foal, only a few months old and living in the market with my parents and siblings. One sunny morning, I awoke to see a beautiful young woman leaning over me. She was carrying a tiny baby in her arms and was murmuring very softly, "He's a beautiful little horse isn't he, Caligula, with his white coat and mane. Do you want him?" The baby giggled loudly, and pointed at me. "Don't worry. Mommy Agrippina will buy him for you." With that, she paid my owner, picked up the rope tied around my neck, and led me back to her home. I've lived with Caligula ever since then, with him riding me, and me showing him affection.

Then, one year, life as I knew it changed dramatically. Caligula's father, Germanicus, died suspiciously on October X, XIX A.D., and VII year old Caligula and I were sent to live with his great-grandmother Livia. She was a fussy old lady who took pleasure in scolding Caligula for getting mud on the floor, dirt on his clothes, and everything else she could possibly think of. Life was absolutely miserable.

Two years later, Livia died and we were sent to live with Caligula's grandmother, Antonia. In contrast to our former experience, Antonia was the kindest parent or guardian Caligula had ever met. She always gave us special treats of fruit after our meals and praised Caligula for everything he did. Life couldn't have been better!

Later, when he was XIX, Caligula was summoned to join Emperor Tiberius at Capri. Caligula felt it his duty to respond to the call, but I felt it unnecessary. We were having the time of our lives with Antonia, so why should we leave? I did everything I could to keep us from going, including biting, kicking, wailing, and even pretending to be ill. We went.

Caligula and I remained with Tiberius until, suddenly, Caligula became the Emperor, when Tiberius died on March XVI, XXXVII A.D. Caligula was in the perfect position to become Emperor, except that Tiberius's will named him *and* his cousin Tiberius Gemellus joint heirs. Our friend Caligula didn't enjoy the prospect of sharing the throne and simply ordered his cousin to be killed immediately. I was starting to doubt his leadership skills.

At first, I was stunned by how good a leader Caligula was. He did all sorts of things I would have done if I were emperor. Firstly, he gave a bonus to the Praetorian Guard, a generous action I suppose. Next he honored all dead including his parents, and publicly destroyed Tiberius's personal papers (I wouldn't have done *that!*). Lastly, he recalled all exiles (Also something I wouldn't have done. They were probably exiled for a good reason.). The citizens of Rome were so overwhelmed with joy they made a little coin for him (It might even have his name on it! I would know if I could read.). If he did all these wonderful things, why do I think he is a hay barrel? "What went wrong?" you may be asking. Well, I'll try to explain.

It all started when Caligula became seriously ill. The entire empire became beset by sadness and sympathy over Caligula's sickness. Caligula finally recovered, but not without a

price. He went bizarre. Well, he did some pretty nasty things including banishing his wife, killing some loyal individuals, and forcing his father-in-law to commit suicide. I still shake in my hooves when I think about it.

Ever since then, I have made sure not to get on the wrong side of Caligula. He is a nasty tyrant. Worse even than rotten apples! I think I might run away from the stables, and the consul. I wish that I could have just stayed with Caligula's mother when he went to live with Livia. It's a good thing he can't read horse, or he might destroy me!

Oh no! I am done with my story so far and now I have to face the present. The audience is murmuring and applauding me, their new consul. Caligula is bowing graciously and leaving. I am being taken away to the stables and I have had to relive my entire life with you. I am exhausted. Please pardon me if I fall asleep...

Good morning! I am awake and it is January XXIV, XLI A.D., one year since I was appointed consul. I am not enjoying my role in office even though I do get a whole barrel of apples every day. As a consul, I pretty much just represent one part of the Roman Empire. Seeing as this is pretty boring, I tried to resign halfway through my term, but since no one speaks horse around here, that didn't happen.

I am stretching to exercise my muscular legs and hips, which I do every morning to keep in shape. Caligula doesn't ride me anymore because who would ride one of the consuls of Rome? Not me. Suddenly I hear yelling! Someone is screaming, "The emperor is dead! The emperor is dead! Let us rejoice! The emperor is dead!" Caligula is dead? Maybe I can resign now! I struggle to escape my stable and finally the cord around my neck breaks. I crash through the door of my stall and begin to gallop at full speed toward Caligula's sleeping quarters. This is wonderful! Now I just need to find out how it happened.

As I approach the palace, a slave runs out and yells, "It was the Praetorian Guard! They have admitted it! They murdered Caligula! Who will be the emperor now that he is dead?" I have to admit, I am not certain. I am hoping, though, that it is someone who will let me resign once and for all. I am sick of consulship.

Another servant runs up and bellows, "Emperor Caligula has been stabbed XXX times by the Praetorian Guard, led by Cassius!" Yuck. He could have left out the gruesome details. They made me not want to eat apples for the rest of my life. That's not a good thing for a horse. I was starting to worry about my health too. That's unhealthy.

"The consul has decided to declare Caligula's uncle Claudius the Emperor of Rome!" Everyone that hears the news is applauding vigorously. I am stamping my hooves on the soft ground under foot. "And," the servant added, "to have Incitatus resign from the Roman Consul!" Everyone applauds again and I stomp my feet even harder in gratitude. As I've said before, consulship is not my number one favorite activity. I'd have to say that would be eating apples. See, I am sounding healthier already.

Slowly and exhaustedly, I trudge back to my partially ruined stable and settle down to munching on an apple. My life is definitely not that of an ordinary horse. I have been bought by the future emperor, become a consul of Rome, and seen the fall of that emperor. Who knows what will happen next?

## Bibliography

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