

THE ROMAN INVASION



NARRATOR

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our play about the Roman invasion.

A long time ago in a land far away..... Roman soldiers marched across Europe and fought the Barbarians. Rebel uprisings were squashed and the mighty Roman Army, under the command of The Emperor, conquered many European lands and some beyond. The Roman Empire was strong and ruled with great force. Still, in the North, one small island remained resistant...

Our play opens in Rome. The year is 43 AD. The Emperor Claudius is bored (*Dominic sighs and says in a loud bored voice 'I'm bored!'*)

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus was Roman emperor from 41 to 54. He was born at Lugdunum in Gaul, the first Roman Emperor to be born outside Italy. He was afflicted with a limp (*Dominic limps about on stage a bit*) and slight deafness due to sickness at a young age (*Dominic says 'What?'* in a loud annoying voice).

Scene 1 – The Emperor’s Palace

STAR WARS MUSIC

Claudius eating grapes

Glutimus: Hail Claudius and greetings from Glutimus Maximus!

Ludicrus (Camille): Hail Claudius and greetings from Ludicrus Cranius!

Minimus (Gael): Hail Claudius and greetings from Minimus Decimus Meridius!

Claudius (Vincent) (bored, sighing loudly): Yes, yes. Now, what news from the senate?

Glutimus: Well, there are reports from Pompeii that Mount Vesuvius is actually a volcano and is about to erupt. Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous?

Claudius (angrily): I've told you before, Glutimus, you must pay no attention to gossip. (Turning angrily to Ludicrus) Ludicrus, what news have *you* brought to your Emperor?

Ludicrus: Russelus Crowus the gladiator beat the Barbarians at the Colosseum last night.

Claudius (growing more exasperated): I know that – I WAS THERE! Surely Minimus, *you* have some news.

Minimus: Yes, your excellency. The Senate decided to name a month after the greatest Emperor of all time.

Claudius (clapping his hands in joy): Oh! How wonderful Clauduary...

Minimus (nervously): Ehm.. No your excellency not after *you*, after *Julius Caesar* – July.

Claudius (stamping his foot angrily, senators taking a step back in fear) Him again! He died nearly 80 years ago! Haven't they stopped honouring him yet? I'm sick to death of all the statues, roads and offerings to the Gods for Caesar. After all he can't have been that great. The Senators murdered him!!

Minimus (nervously): Y-Yes your excellency. Well, I am afraid there is no other news then.

Claudius (with a wicked gleam in his eye): Then we shall have to make some news of our own. I'm tired of hearing about Caesar - it's always *Caesar did this* or *Caesar did that*. (Pouting) Nothing about ME. (feeling sorry for himself) Everybody in Rome thinks I'm a dim-witted coward.

Ludicrus: But you are a *great* ruler Claudius.

Glutimus: A *fine* Emperor.

Minimus (giving Claudius the 'thumbs-up'): You're *great, really great!!*

Claudius (Arrogantly strutting around the stage): Yes, well. we will just have to show everyone HOW great won't we?

Ludicrus: But how? You haven't really DONE anything except write a History book, and I don't think generations of schoolchildren will thank you for that.

Glutimus: Quite!

Minimus (hesitantly): I suppose you could always *conquer* somebody.

Claudius (eyes lighting up): Brilliant! But who?

Ludicrus: What about Gaul?

Claudius: Gaul's gone!

Glutimus: What about Iberia?

Claudius (getting more annoyed): Iberia's gone!

Ludicrus: Asia Minor?

Claudius (anger rising): Asia Minor's gone!

Glutimus: What about Egypt?

Claudius (anger rising higher): Egypt's gone – remember Cleopatra. Haven't you read my History book?

Minimus: What about Britannia?

Claudius: Britannia's gone you fool! Julius Caesar conquered it about 100 years ago.

Minimus: Ah! No! He didn't. That is, he only conquered some of it. In fact, he only managed to conquer a tiny bit of it in the South. It was said the inhabitants - Celts I think they are called - were too unruly and Great Caesar gave up!!

Claudius: Minimus Decimus Meridius you are... (dramatic tension) BRILLIANT! Britannia it is then! Send General Attackus to me.

Minimus Yes your excellency.

ENTER ATTACKUS (Clément)

Attackus: You sent for me Mighty Claudius?

Claudius: Yes. General prepare your army - we march on Britannia in a month's time.

Attackus: B-but Emperor Claudius, Britannia is full of mad Celts and Englishmen!

Claudius: So what!

Attackus (visibly frightened): But they don't fight by the rules! And they're really nasty and shout rude names at you!

Claudius (angrily): So get off with you, and start training your army, Attackus!!

Attackus (whining) But *sir*...

Claudius: I said *off with you*, man - you are fighting for the glory of Rome!

Attackus leaves, shaking his head sadly from side to side and sighing deeply.

Scene 2 – The Army Training Ground

Roman Army: Gael – Solal – Vincent – Yannis – Lucas – Paul – Alexander – Camille -

ENTER ATTACKUS. HE SHOUTS ORDERS TO ARMY OFF STAGE AND THEY MARCH ON

Attackus: Roman Army, Attention! By the left forward march... Sinister, dexter, sinister dexter...

Roman Army Halt. Left Turn.

ATTACKUS GOES ALONG RANKS TO INSPECT TROOPS

Now men, we are to attack Britannia in a month.

Soldiers (horrified): Oh no! Not Britannia again!

Attackus (menacingly): Any complaints, and I shall run you through with my sword. As I was saying, in a month's time we march on Britannia.

Soldiers (pretending to be happy): Oh! Goody goody.

Attackus: That's better. Now, you should all be equipped with the following things. And remember - it is up to you to buy your armour. It is a great honour to be in the Roman Army and you wouldn't want to let Rome and your family down by getting killed would you?

Soldiers (loud voices in unison): No General Attackus!

Attackus: Step forward soldier. First you need a cassis on your head because Roman soldiers use their brains and we want to make sure yours are in one piece. Secondly, you need a lorica segmentata to protect your upper body. Third of all, you must carry your Scutum and use it to defend yourself or attack the enemy with the metal boss on the front - it can make a nasty mess of a Celt's face. Finally keep your gladius in your hand at all times and don't go leaving it in anybody!! Back in line soldier. Roman Army left turn. By the left quick march. ...Sinister, dexter...

THEY MARCH UP AND DOWN A FEW TIMES

Attackus: Now we will practise some battle formations. Shields up! We call this the tortoise formation and we use this when arrows or spears are raining down on us. By the left quick march. Sinister, dexter...

Soldiers, form for attack. This is the wedge formation and we will use this to break up the Celts. By the left quick march. Sinister, dexter...

Roman Legions we are now ready to march to Britannia.

SOLDIERS MARCH ON SPOT CHANTING

(Solal says each line, repeated by soldiers)

We are Roman soldiers. Marching North to Britain. We wear skirts and armour. We carry shields and weapons. We're highly trained and skilful. We're loyal and follow orders. We fight for our Emperor. To make our nation powerful. We invade and conquer. We're not scared of anyone. So when we get to Britain. We'll frighten all the Celts away. Yes, we are Roman soldiers. Marching to Britannia. When we reach the Channel. We'll row our boats across it. We'll land upon the beaches. We'll shout to our enemy.
THE ROMANS HAVE LANDED!!

Scene 3 –

NARRATOR: Well folks, here we are, on a beach in Kent. Today the Romans invade Britain!

CELTS SITTING IN DECK CHAIRS

Edna (Ambre): Ethel, do you like my make-up? It's wode you know.

Ethel (Laure): Yes, very nice – the blue matches your eyes.

Edna: Lovely weather isn't it?

Ethel: Oh, yes, better than yesterday. (proudly) My Egbert is decorating our hut today.

Edna: Oh yes, what colour?

Ethel: Same as usual – mud-coloured.

ANOTHER LONG SILENCE

Edna: Lovely and peaceful here isn't it – I don't know why people go abroad for their holidays Give me a beach in Britannia any day.

ROMAN ARMY GET OUT OF BOATS AND WALK TOWARDS THEM.

Ethel: Edna, look over there. What's that?

Edna: Oh! That'll be some of those Gauls from France for a day out.

Ethel: Are you sure Edna? They look terribly smart.

Edna: They always were into fashion. I expect it's some new fad.

Ethel: Are you sure? They seem to be waving swords!!

Edna: Oh! No! It's those Romans again! I'd recognise their tanned legs anywhere!!

Ethel: I suppose we'd better go and tell the rest of the tribe. But that one at the front is mine!!

EDNA AND ETHEL RETURN TO CAMP

Ethel (excitedly) Egbert! Egbert! Those rotten Romans have just landed on the beach.

Egbert (Milan): Are you sure, Ethel? (accusingly) Have you been at the mead again?

Ethel (indignantly): No! Ask Edna! She saw them too.

Edna: Yes, that's right, Bert. Come on, put your wattle and daub down and put your war paint on.

Egbert: OK. Come on lads grab your weapons there's a fight on the beach!!

ACT OUT ROMAN ATTACK, ROMANS WIN.

Attackus: In the Year AD 42 I claim Britannia for the Emperor Claudius and Rome.

ROMANS SETTLE DOWN IN CAMP. BRITONS LIMP BACK TO THEIR CAMP.

Egbert: Blimy - those Romans are vicious! One of them pushed their shield in my face and then stabbed me while I was rubbing my nose!

Ethel: You're right, Bert, they are *ever* so strong, especially *that one* on the front row!!

Egbert: Well, some of them seem quite decent chaps. I reckon we'd be better off if we just get along with them - no point in getting any more Celts killed.

Ethel (sighing romantically): Yes I am prepared to get along with them too.

Edna: At least you can finish the decorating then Egbert.

Egbert: OK, OK I'll have a chat with their leader.

EGBERT GOES TO ROMAN CAMP.

Egbert: Listen mate. I've had a chat with the chaps and we reckon we can all get along OK. So if it's alright with you we'd like to call a halt to all this fighting.

Attackus: Fine by me. I think the lads will be pleased to settle here for a while. Right lads?

Soldiers: Yes General!

THEY ALL SHAKE HANDS AND MINGLE.

Scene 4- Back in Rome

STAR WARS MUSIC AGAIN

Claudius: Well - what news from Britannia, Minimus?

Minimus: I have here some letters written home from the soldiers. It seems all is well and Britain is secured.

MINIMUS HANDS THE LETTERS TO CLAUDIUS WHO PRETENDS TO READ THEM.

Soldier1: Dear Mummy, the attack on Britain was successful and we have now started to build a town at a place called Colchester. We have taken this to be our capital city. The soldiers, as usual, have been building roads, bridges and helping to run the town. I have married a lovely English girl called Edna. I am sorry mummy - I know you wanted me to marry a nice Italian girl but I could be here for 25 years before I am given my pension. Most of the Britons are OK, but there are a few tribes in the North which are rather rough. I'll see you in about AD 68! Lots of Love. Septimus

Soldier 2: Dear Wife, Britain is an awful place. The people live in huts with no central heating and no toilets. The women are big and loud and are allowed to rule their tribes when the men die. They have some dreadful habits such as painting themselves and dying their hair. I don't know what they use to dye their hair but it smells awful! The weather is very changeable. In winter they have snow and rain for months, and in the summer it rains as well. I wish I was back home with you in Rome as the wine here is pretty dreadful too. It is my turn for guard duty now so I must go. Your Husband Allius

Claudius: Seems like everything is going well. I may visit later this year.

Scene 5 - 17 Years Later

Attackus: I am just sending my annual report back to Rome. The year is AD 60. Seventeen years have passed since the Roman invasion. Claudius is now dead and his stepson Nero is Emperor. Seutonius Paulinus is governor of Britain and we have built several Roman towns at Verulamium, Calleva and Londinium. As leader of the army I organize building forts and roads so that we can squash any rebellions quickly.

BOUDICCA'S CAMP

Boudicca (Laure): You're a real wimp Prasutagus. I don't know why I married you. You never stand up to these Romans. Why did you let them come in and take over? You are a spineless coward. If it was up to me I'd fight for what is ours. Are you listening to me husband?

1st Celt (Ambre): Your majesty, I think he is dead.

Boudicca: Dead?! What do you mean *dead*!! Trust him to desert me when I needed him most - he never did have any bottle. Well, take him away. I'm queen now so we will do things my way from now on. Agreed?? OK so here is the plan.

THEY HUDDLE TOGETHER AND BOUDICCA WHISPERS.

Soldier 1 (Camille): General! General! Boudicca is revolting!

Attackus: We know that! Now, sit down and finish the game of cards.

Soldier 2 (Lucas): No, no you don't understand! She's leading the rebel alliance in an attack on the forces of the Emperor.

Soldier 3 (Paul): You've been visiting the Amphitheatre too much! Sit down.

Soldier 4 (Yannis): But she IS attacking.

Attackus: OK! OK! You four go and sort this out - she's only a woman after all!

ATTACK ROMAN SOLDIERS AND WIN. SOLDIERS RETURN LOOKING BEDRAGGLED.

Attackus: What did Boudicca do to you chaps, have you stopped the revolt?

Soldier 3: No she won! She's the most frightening thing I've seen since Hannibal's elephants! She's marching on Colchester, Verulamium and Londinium, burning all the Roman buildings down.

Soldier 1: I *told* you she was revolting.

Attackus: Right lads, time to shape up!

BATTLE WITH CELTS AGAIN. ROMANS WIN.

Boudicca: I don't believe it! You useless lot couldn't win the lottery, let alone a battle. I'm off. Anybody else want to join me?

Celt 1 (Ambre): What are you going to do Boud?

Boudicca: Poison myself of course, those Romans are not going to make a fool out of me!!

Celts: Bye Boudicca!!

Postscript

Claudius: I was remembered as a great Emperor and Rome ruled Britain for another 350 years. They never did rule Scotland to the North and eventually Hadrian built a wall to keep the Picts out and that is as far North as the Roman Empire went.

THE END