

MYTHS, GODS  
AND GLADIATORS

IN  
**ANCIENT  
ROME**

STEPHEN DAVIES  
LAURIE AVON

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**COMIC  
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# MYTHS, GODS AND GLADIATORS IN ANCIENT ROME

BY  
STEPHEN DAVIES  
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B P P



# TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

8 WHO WERE THE ANCIENT ROMANS?

10 THE CREATION STORY

12 MEET THE GODS

14 DIDO AND AENEAS

20 THE EMPEROR HALL OF FAME

22 ROMULUS AND REMUS

28 THE ROMAN ARMY

30 BOUDICCA'S BATTLES

36 HOW THE ROMAN MYTHS EXPLAINED THE WORLD

38 BAUCIS AND PHILEMON

44 ROMAN INVENTIONS

46 POLYPHEMUS AND ULYSSES

52 GLORIUS (AND GORY) GLADIATORS

54 HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

60 A MYTHIC MAP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

?





## WHO WERE THE ANCIENT ROMANS?

Rome was founded in the year 753 BC. It began as a kingdom, with its founder Romulus as king. Then in 509BC Rome became a republic, a state without a king. Finally, in 27BC Rome became an empire, ruled by an all-powerful emperor.

Thanks to its ambitious leaders and its mighty army, the Roman empire grew and grew, until it included all of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea and a quarter of the world's population. Romans boasted of 'the glory of Rome' and visitors to the great city marvelled at its beautiful temples and statues, and its vast amphitheatres like the Colosseum.

## SO WHAT ARE THE ROMAN MYTHS?

Even though the ancient Romans were very proud of their culture, they owed much of it to ancient Greece. The Romans were completely obsessed with Greece. They copied Greek architecture, Greek philosophy, Greek theatre and Greek poetry.

Even their mythology (ancient beliefs about gods and goddesses) was heavily influenced by Greece. Roman writers, such as Ovid and Virgil, wrote in their own language, Latin, but their characters and plots were often inspired by the works of earlier Greek writers, such as Homer and Hesiod.

Archaeologists have discovered stunning mosaics on floors and walls all over the Roman empire. These intricate artworks help us to understand more about the Roman way of life, and some of them show scenes from Roman mythology.

Adults and children alike loved to imagine the glorious adventures of Aeneas, the terrifying crimes of the one-eyed monster Polyphemus, and the heroism of the Roman soldier Horatius.



# THE CREATION STORY

A creation myth is a story about how the world began. Ancient civilisations had all sorts of weird and wonderful ideas about how the world formed, and this is the Roman creation story.

In the beginning, there was Nothing. That Nothing was Nox, goddess of night, spreading her black wings over the vast emptiness before her.



And then there was Something.



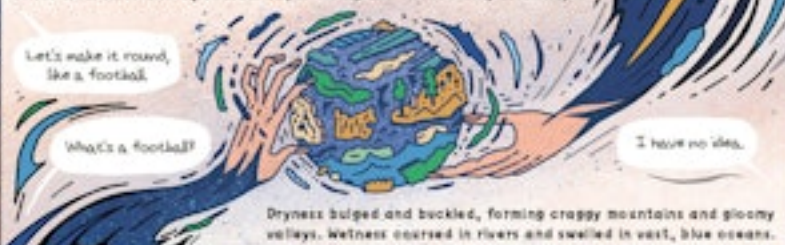
The Something was messy and disorganised. The Something was Chaos.



With a shuddering shrug of its shoulders, Chaos began to get organized. The light bits separated from the heavy bits, and the wet bits detached from the dry bits.



It was as if the heavenly fingers of some great god were at work, dividing solids from skies and liquid from air, moulding the Chaos slowly into shape.



Let's make it round, like a football.

What's a football?

I have no idea.

Dryness bulged and buckled, forming craggy mountains and gloomy valleys. Wetness coarsened in rivers and swelled in vast, blue oceans.

Terra, goddess of the land, appeared. Did Terra make the land or did the land make her?



Or maybe I am the land, and the land is me.

Coelus, god of the heavens, was there as well. Did Coelus make the heavens, or did the heavens make him? Or maybe he was the heavens, and the-



Yes, yes, we get it.

From the sea sprang fish, birds swarmed the air, and the land was overrun with pink fairy armadillos and other peculiar creatures.



Meanwhile, the heavens brought forth gods and goddesses of all shapes and sizes.



One of these gods, Prometheus, was the junk modelling champion of the universe.



Prometheus mixed a lump of earth, a dash of water and a pinch of heaven, then moulded the mixture into the most beautiful shape he could imagine.



I name you, humankind.

Life in the heavens was far from peaceful. Coelus was overthrown by his son Saturn, who banished him to the underworld.



Oh this isn't funny!

With his father gone, Saturn crowned himself king of the gods and ruler of the universe.



I know, right? Shouldn't you be EVEN!

With Saturn reigning in the heavens, the humans on earth enjoyed an era of peace, happiness and All You Can Eat buffets. Looking back, the Romans called this THE GOLDEN AGE OF HUMANKIND.



But it was not to last. Just as Coelus was overthrown by his son, Saturn was overthrown by his son, Jupiter.



I'M THE KING OF THE CASTLE!

I think this game has got out of hand, don't you, son?



Get DOWN, you dirty rascal!

Passargh!



Kids today. No respect.

That headstrong, thundering son of Saturn seized the throne of power and ruled the cosmos from that day forth.



Fight, let's have some FUN!



# MEET THE ROMAN GODS

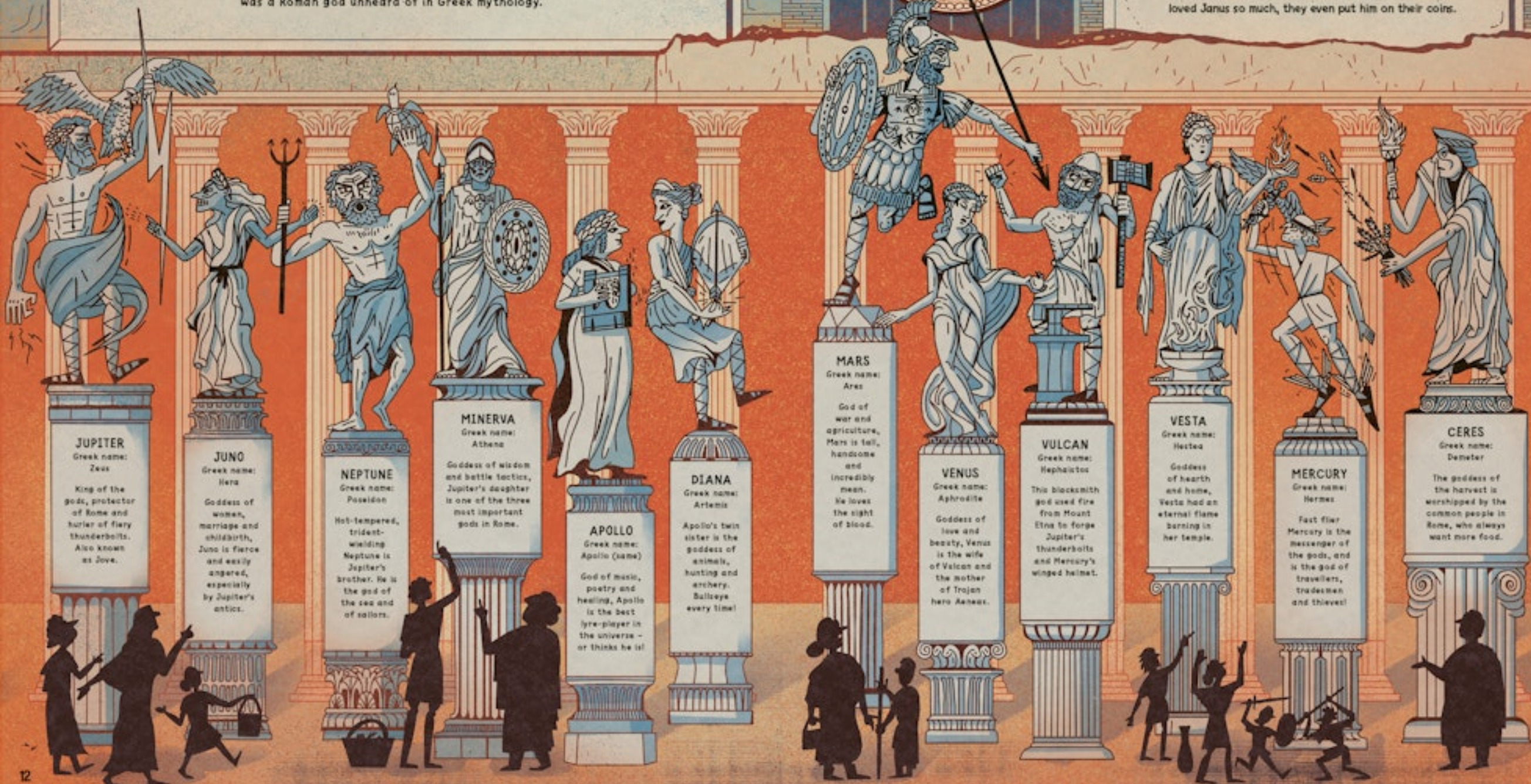
At one end of the Forum in ancient Rome stood the Porch of the Harmonious Gods, where a row of gold and bronze statues portrayed the twelve most important gods of Ancient Rome. These gods played a huge part in everyday life. If you offered them your prayers and sacrifices, they would be kind to you and bring you success.

The Romans were heavily influenced by the ancient Greeks, and each of the Romans gods had a Greek equivalent...except for one. Janus, the god with two faces, was a Roman god unheard of in Greek mythology.

## JANUS

Long before the city of Rome was built, Janus was a human king of Latium (Italy). When Jupiter overthrew Saturn, Janus welcomed Saturn into his home. In return, Saturn taught Janus how to plough, sow and harvest. Janus's farming skills caused his whole kingdom to prosper.

After his death, Janus became a god of beginnings and endings. He has two faces, one looking back to the past, the other looking forward to the future. Ancient Romans loved Janus so much, they even put him on their coins.



**JUPITER**  
Greek name:  
Zeus

King of the gods, protector of Rome and hurler of fiery thunderbolts. Also known as Jove.

**JUNO**  
Greek name:  
Hera

Goddess of women, marriage and childbirth. Juno is fierce and easily angered, especially by Jupiter's antics.

**NEPTUNE**  
Greek name:  
Poseidon

Hot-tempered, trident-wielding Neptune is Jupiter's brother. He is the god of the sea and of sailors.

**MINERVA**  
Greek name:  
Athena

Goddess of wisdom and battle tactics. Jupiter's daughter is one of the three most important gods in Rome.

**APOLLO**  
Greek name:  
Apollo (same)

God of music, poetry and healing. Apollo is the best lyre-player in the universe - or thinks he is!

**DIANA**  
Greek name:  
Artemis

Apollo's twin sister is the goddess of animals, hunting and archery. Bulls-eye every time!

**MARS**  
Greek name:  
Ares

God of war and agriculture. Mars is tall, handsome and incredibly mean. He loves the sight of blood.

**VENUS**  
Greek name:  
Aphrodite

Goddess of love and beauty. Venus is the wife of Vulcan and the mother of Trojan hero Aeneas.

**VULCAN**  
Greek name:  
Hephaestus

This blacksmith god used fire from Mount Etna to forge Jupiter's thunderbolts and Mercury's winged helmet.

**VESTA**  
Greek name:  
Hestia

Goddess of hearth and home. Vesta had an eternal flame burning in her temple.

**MERCURY**  
Greek name:  
Hermes

Fast flier Mercury is the messenger of the gods, and is the god of travellers, tradesmen and thieves!

**CERES**  
Greek name:  
Demeter

The goddess of the harvest is worshipped by the common people in Rome, who always want more food.



# DIDO AND AENEAS

In the ancient city of Tyre, there lived a queen called Dido. She was a clever and determined leader.



But when her husband was murdered, the queen faced persecution from wicked people in her city.



Queen Dido and her supporters decided to leave Tyre for ever and sailed away to find a safer place to live.



Many weeks later, Dido and her people arrived on the coast of Africa, and the great queen led her people in planning their new home. Together they built a magnificent city, whose walls shone white in the African sun.



Not long afterwards, a group of sailors washed up onto the shore at Carthage.



As soon as Queen Dido saw the captain, she recognized him as the great Trojan warrior Aeneas, the son of the goddess Venus.



Queen Dido was dying to hear the Trojan's adventure stories, so she invited Aeneas and his men to a banquet. As soon as the plates were empty, she asked the traveller to tell his tale.



My tale is guaranteed to make hot tears course down your cheeks. The topless towers of mighty Troy have fallen to the Greeks.



They made a massive, wooden horse. We thought it was a present. We didn't know the contents of its tummy were unpleasant.



I woke up with a start to find the neighbourhood ablaze. I put my father on my back and swiftly ran away.



With other gallant refugees I hurriedly set sail. Don't think that I escaped unharmed - I broke a fingernail.



We bravely sailed the seven seas, assailed by hunger pangs. It must have been three weeks before my father shouted 'LAND!'



Bleary-eyed and ravenous we struggled up the beach. We were barbecuing burgers when we heard a sudden 'SCREECH'!



Those horrid harpies cursed us and they swore to make us pay. So we left the burgers burning and we swiftly sailed away.



For seven years my flimsy ship was tossed upon the seas. I faced fifty shades of danger with my fellow refugees.



But the most distressing chapter of the whole distasteful business was the nail-biting episode of Scylla and Charybdis.

Charybdis is a whirlpool of considerable size and Scylla is a nymph with 12 bulges on her thighs.

You can chart a course between them but it takes a lot of skill to, it's like trying to thread a needle when the needle's trying to kill you.











That evening Dido dressed herself for another sumptuous feast. When she stepped out onto her balcony to watch the sunset, she saw a scene below that made her reel.

As Trojan sails rose and filled with breeze, Queen Dido's heart was overcome by grief.





# THE EMPEROR HALL OF FAME

Every Roman emperor had absolute power over the senate (political leaders), the army, the priests and the people. Some proved to be good and wise rulers. Others were mad, bad and dangerous to know.



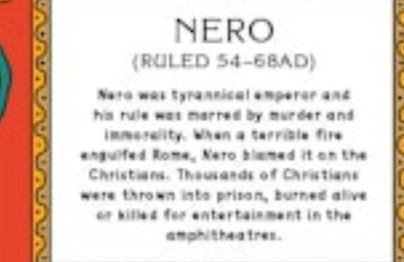
## JULIUS CAESAR (RULED 46-44BC)

After conquering Gaul (modern day France) at the head of the Roman army, Julius Caesar marched back to Rome and declared himself dictator for life. Less than a year later, he was assassinated by a group of politicians who thought he was too ambitious.



## AUGUSTUS (RULED 27BC-14AD)

Augustus means 'revered one'. He was given the name in the year 27BC when he became the first proper emperor of Rome. Augustus's reign was the start of the Pax Romana (Roman Peace), a time of peace and stability throughout the Roman empire.



## NERO (RULED 54-68AD)

Nero was tyrannical emperor and his rule was marked by murder and immorality. When a terrible fire engulfed Rome, Nero blamed it on the Christians. Thousands of Christians were thrown into prison, burned alive or killed for entertainment in the amphitheatres.



## TRAJAN (98-117AD)

The emperors who ruled between 96AD and 180AD (Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius) were known as 'the five good emperors', and Trajan was the best of the lot. He built aqueducts and roads, cut taxes and set up projects to care for poor and orphaned children.



## AGRIPPINA (EMPRESS 49-54AD)

When Nero came to power as a teenager, his mother Agrippina ruled alongside him as empress. But Nero soon grew tired of his mother's interference and his thoughts turned to murder. First, he tried to poison Agrippina, but she had trained herself to be resistant to poison. Next, he used a booby-trap to sink her ship, but Agrippina managed to swim ashore. In the end, Nero gave up on being subtle and sent three sword-wielding assassins to kill his mother.



## HADRIAN (117-138AD)

This wise and capable ruler concentrated on strengthening the empire rather than expanding it. He oversaw the building of a 13-mile border wall which protected Roman Britain from the ferocious tribes to the north. He also started a trend for emperors to have beards.



## COMMODUS (180-192AD)

Right after the five good emperors came a truly terrible one. Obsessed with mythical strongman Hercules, Commodus spent all of his time bodybuilding, chariot racing and fighting. He won 135 gladiatorial contests in the arena, because no opponent dared lay a finger on him. At the age of 31, Commodus was strangled in his bath by his own wrestling coach.



## CONSTANTINE THE GREAT (312-337AD)

The night before a battle against a rival emperor, Constantine the Great saw a vision of a huge, fiery cross in the sky, and he commanded all of his soldiers to paint Christian symbols on their shields. When they won the battle, Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.



## LIVIA DRUSILLA (EMPRESS 27BC-14AD)

Livia was charming, witty and extremely intelligent. Women in ancient Rome could not be senators or emperors, but Livia had great influence over her husband Augustus. Here was the brain behind most of the emperor's best decisions.



## CALIGULA (RULED FROM 37-41AD)

His real name was Gaius, but it was his childhood nickname Caligula ('Little Booties') that stuck. Caligula was a cruel and wildly eccentric emperor. He drank pearls dissolved in vinegar, fell in love with the moon, and tried to make his horse a senator.





Despite his troubled past, Aeneas was a very sensible king, and his city Latium grew and prospered.



After Aeneas's death, his son Ascanius became king.



Ascanius founded a second city, called Alba Longa, high on a ridge above a glittering lake.



As the centuries passed, Alba Longa was ruled by many good kings, one after another.



Number 15, King Numitor, was the best of all - a wise ruler, a devoted husband and a loving father to his son Lausus and daughter Rhea.



Numitor's brother Amulius was bitter and twisted and envied his brother's power.



Amulius concocted a scheme to overthrow his brother and claim the crown.



One day, when Lausus rode out on a hunting trip, evil Amulius was waiting for him...



Cruel Amulius entered Alba Longa and imprisoned King Numitor, claiming the crown for himself.



Worried that Rhea might one day have a son who would overthrow him, Amulius forced his niece to become a priestess, promising never to marry or have children.



TWENTY YEARS

Rhea broke her promise, giving birth to twin boys. King Amulius was furious.



The King wanted to kill the twins himself, but he was afraid of the fierce god Mars, so he agreed to banish them instead.



Secretly, Amulius ordered his servants to do the dirty deed and kill the newborn babes.



The servants went down to the Tiber river and did as they were told... almost.



The king said THROW THEM IN, not PLACE THEIR BASKET GENTLY ON THE WATER!



A passing she-wolf heard the babies' cry and pulled the basket out of the river.







MANY YEARS LATER...





# BAUCIS AND PHILEMON

Winter in Phrygia was harsh and cold, with biting frost and swirling snow. One evening, an old man was hobbling down a mountainside, bent low beneath a bundle of oak.

On reaching his village, the old man shuffled past poor villas and stables.



Brrrr...we call our land Phrygia, 'cos it's like a fridge 'ere!



At the edge of the village stood a humble log cabin where the old man lived.



Philemon laid down the firewood, took off his cloak and greeted his wife Baucis.



It's honey, I'm home!



Missed you!

Missed you more!

After fifty years of marriage, Philemon and Baucis were as much in love as when they first met. More so, in fact. Their love for each other had grown and deepened over the decades like the roots of an ancient tree.



Philemon peered beneath the kitchen table to greet the other love of his life.



Looking good, Rosana!

Honk!

You're daft about that goose.

There was a sudden knock at the door. Philemon hurried to open it.



COMING!

Two strangers stood on the doorstep. They told Philemon that they were weary travellers seeking shelter from the wind and snow.



Sorry to trouble you.

No trouble at all. Come in!

When the goose saw the visitors, she began to behave in a very peculiar manner.



You are welcome, sir. Please take a seat.

Sorry about our goose! I don't know what's got into her.

Honk-Honk!

## RULE 1

The first rule of Phrygian hospitality was this: Make sure your guests are toasty warm.

Baucis pulled dry twigs from the roof thatch, to start a fire.



The firewood is wet with snow! How can we make a fire!

Good idea, Rosana!

Honk-Honk!

The roof would need fixing tomorrow, but that was fine. The main thing was to honour their guests.



Look, lovely.

## RULE 2

The second rule of Phrygian hospitality was just as important: Make sure your guests are well fed.

Baucis fetched the last of the figs and olives from the outhouse.



She found honeycomb in the bee hive and two white eggs in Rosana's nesting box.



Honk!



HONK!

HONK!

The old couple worked together like clockwork, preparing the meal and chatting to their guests. When the food was ready, Baucis scrubbed the table with sprigs of mint and Philemon put a wedge under the wobbly leg.



Going anywhere nice on holiday this year?

We're sort of on holiday at the moment, actually.





The travellers sighed as they remembered the fierceness of the villagers.







A horrifying wall of water rose up in the west and crashed over the village. Everything was swept away—houses, stables, everything.



Baucis and Philemon wept for their neighbours. Sure, they were narrow-minded. Sure, they were cold-hearted. But wiping them all off the face of the earth seemed like a monstrous over-reaction.

Our poor neighbours! I'll miss their songs.



The only thing that remained in the valley below was the couple's humble cottage.

Although now it was neither humble nor a cottage. It had been transformed into a golden temple.

Look, Baucis!

It took me ages to thatch that roof.



Jupiter spoke gently to Philemon and Baucis. He praised them for their kindness and offered to give them anything they desired.

No, like a Jupiter.

Ooh, like a genie!

And just one wish, not three.



Philemon and Baucis knelt before the gods.

We'd like a sparkly collar for our goose, please.

Wait! No! He didn't mean that. Give us a minute.



Philemon and Baucis asked to become priests, serving the gods in that newly-appeared temple. They also asked to die at the same time, so that neither of them would grieve the other.

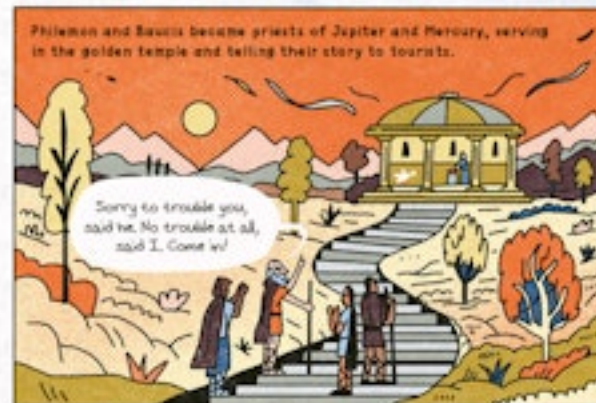
Sigh. That's two separate wishes.

It's fine, Mercury. I'll do them both.



And so their prayer was granted.

Ta da!



Philemon and Baucis become priests of Jupiter and Mercury, serving in the golden temple and telling their story to tourists.

Sorry to trouble you, said he. No trouble at all, said I. Come in!



Their second prayer was granted, too. One day, as Baucis and Philemon stood on those sacred steps, a wondrous transformation took place.

How! How!



Together forever, their final words were brief and well-rehearsed.

Love you

Love you more



An oak tree and a lime tree intertwined still stand before that temple, reminding us to keep our ears and hearts wide open for the knock of visitors...or gods.

PLEASE PUT THE HORROR WELCOME (ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE POOR)



# ROMAN INVENTIONS

The Romans were brilliant builders. In the area of ancient Rome shown here, you can see a magnificent chariot-racing stadium, a lofty aqueduct supplying water to a public bathhouse, and the start of a famous road called the Appian Way.

Rome was an enormous city and its people needed water to drink. The River Tiber was too dirty for drinking, so the Romans built long channels to bring fresh water from lakes and rivers up to fifty miles away. The word aqueduct is Latin for 'conveyor of water'. Roman aqueducts were built with a slight downwards slope, so that gravity would move the water along the channel. As Rome's population grew, new aqueducts were built, some of which still work today, built with brick, granite and beautiful marble. Not all aqueducts were high above ground, but some were. The Romans were good at science and they knew that arches were capable of supporting a colossal weight.

Roman bath houses were the world's first leisure centres, boasting high roofs and fine mosaic floors. There were hot, tepid and cold pools for bathing, and a separate pool for swimming.

The Romans used special cranes for their building projects. Four men walking on a treadmill could lift a block of stone weighing up to eight tons!

Public toilet houses called latrines were common in ancient Rome. People sat next to each other to pee, and the dirty water was flushed away through a clever sewer system. Venus, goddess of love, was also the goddess of the sewer in Rome: Venus the Purifier!

We think of underfloor heating as a modern invention, but the Romans got there first.

Warm air from underground ovens circulated in the gaps around stone pillars. This system was called a hypocaust.

The Romans did not invent concrete but their recipe was definitely better than anyone else's. They added quicklime to their cement, making it able to heal itself whenever it cracked! Roman super-concrete was used throughout the empire to build roads, walls, aqueducts, bridges, dams, amphitheatres, palaces and all kinds of other buildings, many of which are still standing today. As well as concrete, the Romans built with brick, granite and beautiful marble.

The Romans were ingenious people. Our years and leap years come from a calendar devised in ancient Rome, and even the letters in this sentence are from the Roman alphabet.

There's no place like Rome!

The Romans did not invent roads but they did build them longer, stronger and straighter than anyone else. The Appian Way, for example, stretched 350 miles across Italy. The vast network of Roman roads inspired the saying, 'All roads lead to Rome'.

The Romans developed an early postal service so that officials could send letters and parcels around the empire. Thousands of little service stations provided messengers with accommodation, food and fresh horses.



# POLYPHEMUS AND ULYSSES

In ancient times, the island of Sicily was home to giants called the Cyclopes (pronounced cyclo-pees). Monstrous and monocular, they roamed the rocky shores, minding their flocks of sheep and goats.



The Cyclopes lived in large families - except for one, who lived alone on the south side of the isle. His name was Polyphemus.



Like all of us, Polyphemus had his strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, he was a very talented musician, playing the lyre more sweetly than anyone else on the island.



On the minus side, he was a godless cannibal.



Polyphemus was a cyclops of strict routine.



One day, Polyphemus was herding his sheep and goats along the beach, when he noticed a sea nymph dancing in the surf.



Polyphemus discovered that the sea nymph's name was Galatea. He had fallen for her hard, and his strict routine became much more flexible.



Unfortunately, Galatea despised the cyclops and his songs.



For the first time in his life, Polyphemus began to make an effort with his appearance. He worked out until his muscles bulged.



He combed his hair with a garden rake and trimmed his beard with a sickle.



He even changed his diet. Sailors came and sailors went without Polyphemus taking so much as a nibble.



But none of these lifestyle changes impressed Galatea, who continued to shun the lovelorn cyclops.



One day, Polyphemus went down to the shore and could not spot Galatea anywhere. He climbed a rock and began to compose a mournful song about unrequited love.













# GLORIOUS (AND GORY) GLADIATORS

The Romans built stadiums called amphitheatres all over the empire and organised violent games for the entertainment of the people. In the Colosseum in Rome, fifty thousand spectators applauded elite fighters called gladiators, whose name came from the word 'gladius' (sword). Different types of gladiator used different armour and equipment, but all of them needed the speed, the strength and the heart to be a winner.

## MURMILLO

The mirmillo was a human tank: tall, muscular and heavily armoured. But the sheer weight of his helmet and shield meant that he could sometimes be outfoxed by a smaller, nimbler opponent.

## SECUTOR

This iconic, fire-themed gladiator wore a bright red loincloth and carried a flashing, dancing sword. His main weakness was his helmet, with its suffocating tightness and tiny eyeholes.

## DIMACHAERUS

Why carry one sword when you can carry two? This highly-skilled ambidextrous fighter was the only gladiator without a shield, using swords for both attack and defence.

## HOPLOMACHUS

Styled as a Greek soldier, another notorious Roman enemy, the spear-carrying hoplomachus wore iron shin-pads and a feathered helmet. His small, sturdy shield was perfect for ramming and bashing opponents.

## VELITES

Styled on the youngest, poorest members of the Roman army, these lightly-armed gladiators wore wolfskin helmets and fought in groups. Faced with a war chariot thundering towards them, the velites would attempt to thrust their long spears in between the spokes.

## THRACIAN

These griffin-helmeted gladiators were styled on the warriors of Thrace, one of Rome's oldest enemies. Kitted out for speed and agility, the Thracian scurried around, slashing at his opponent with a long, curved blade.

## RETIARIUS

If the secutor represented fire, the retiarius was water. He wielded a fishing net to entangle his opponent and a Neptune-style trident. But if his net missed or slipped, he could find himself utterly defenceless.

## ESSEDARIUS

Celtic war chariots struck fear into Roman hearts on the battlefield and proved equally terrifying in the Colosseum. The essedarius threw spears at his opponents and tried to trample them beneath his horse's hooves.

The most skilful gladiators became rich and famous. A gritty mirmillo called Spiculus won so many stylish victories, the emperor Nero gave him three mansions.



# HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

Some of Rome's early kings were total rotters, and the worst of all was King Tarquin. His full name was Tarquinius Superbus, but the only thing he was superb at was imprisoning innocent people.



Not content with ruling Rome, King Tarquin wanted to rule the nearby city of Gabii as well. He told his son Sextus to go to Gabii and take control of the city.



Sextus went to Gabii and had all of the city's leaders arrested or killed. He did even worse things, too.



The people of Rome felt sickened just hearing about his shameful deeds.



While Tarquin was away, the people of Rome decided to take back the leadership of their beautiful city. They formed a republic, a land without a king.



Tarquin returned to find the River Gate of Rome shut and barred. Even his army said they would no longer fight for him.



Tarquin and Sextus went to see a powerful Etruscan king called Lars Porsena. Tarquin explained that he was not allowed to return to his kingdom, not even to visit his mother Tanaquil.



Tarquin and Sextus had no option but to leave Rome. They travelled to Etruria, just north of Rome, a land of delicious food and banging tunes.



Lars Porsena was outraged that an Etruscan king could be so unfairly treated. He leapt to his feet and swore that he would restore Tarquinius Superbus to the throne of Rome.



But after a while, Tarquin and Sextus began to feel home sick.



Lars Porsena sent messengers all over the region to rally a great army. Recruiting an army of eighty thousand men of fighting age.



The army's strongest fighters were three especially fearsome warriors.

LAUSULUS THE PIRATE



Home: Orgo  
Height: 196cm  
Weight: 103kg  
Favourite Weapon: Cutlass  
Interests: Sailing, Pillaging  
Fear factor: 90

SEIUS THE SLAVE DRIVER



Home: Ilva  
Height: 190cm  
Weight: 112kg  
Favourite Weapon: Whip  
Interests: Mining Copper  
Fear factor: 97

ARUNS THE BOAR STRANGLER



Home: Volsinium  
Height: 215cm  
Weight: 128kg  
Favourite Weapon: Bare hands  
Interests: Strangling boars, cross-stitch  
Fear factor: 90



A young Roman soldier called Horatius was standing guard. His orders were to keep an eye on everyone who crossed the bridge over the River Tiber to enter the city.



That afternoon, Horatius spied a cloud of dust on the Janiculum hill - dust from the heels of a thousand panic-stricken villagers.



The crowd of villagers came across Horatius's bridge as fast as their legs could carry them.



The panic-stricken crowd disappeared into the city and the River Gate slammed shut behind them.



In the eerie silence that followed, Horatius remembered the last order given to him by his commanding officer.



A second cloud of dust appeared on the Janiculum - dust from the heels of eighty thousand Etruscan warriors and ten thousand Etruscan horses.



The River Gate creaked open and the Roman army came trip-trapping over Horatius's bridge, led by the mighty Roman warriors Spurius Lartius and Titus Herminius.



The Etruscans charged downhill likeavenous wolves.



Swords and shields clashed and chimed. Horses whinnied. Warriors died.



The Etruscans were winning. Seventeen thousand Roman soldiers were no match for eighty thousand warriors and a thousand horses. Soon, the Roman army was in full retreat.



The defeated army limped back across the bridge. Some of them grabbed axes and started hacking at the wooden supports, attempting to destroy the bridge before the Etruscan army could reach it.



Horatius also ran to the bridge but he did not cross it. Instead, he turned to face the enemy. Stand your ground, Horatius, and hold the bridge...



Horatius was not alone for long. Lartius and Herminius stepped up beside him, ready to play their part and protect the city.



Horatius, Lartius and Herminius jumped and ducked, parried and thrust.

Wave after wave of Etruscan soldiers charged the bridge, only to be struck down by the gallant three.



A volley of Etruscan javelins darkened the sky ...





Lassulus the Pirate, Selus the Slave Driver and Aruns the Bear Stranger chose this moment to launch their attack.

The defenders of Rome threw aside their dented shields and snatched up new ones, just in time.

Those three Etruscan villains were fighting for gold and glory. But Horatius, Lartius and Herminius were fighting for every soul in Rome.





# A MYTHIC MAP OF THE



As the Roman army marched, fought and conquered, their empire expanded to include all of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea, and even as far north as Britain. Romans had their own stories and beliefs, but they also adapted myths from these other peoples, especially the ancient Greeks.

EMPIRE  
WITHOUT  
END

WASN'T BUILT  
IN A DAY

ROME

Great city founded by  
Romulus and protected by  
the two-faced god Janus

ALBA LONGA

Founded by Aeneas's  
son Ascanius

LAVINIUM

Founded by Aeneas after  
he abandoned Queen Dido

SARDINIA

STROPHADES

Two small islands,  
home to the harpies.

SICILY

Home to the dog-thighed sea  
monster Scylla and the one-eyed  
Cyclops Polyphemus

CARTHAGE

North African city  
which became an empire  
hostile to Rome

GREECE

Many of the Roman  
gods originated in  
Greek mythology

THRACIA

A land of fierce fighters  
who inspired the  
'Thracian' gladiator style

TROY

Aeneas fled this famous city when it  
was destroyed by the Greek army

PHRYGIA

Eastern province, home to  
Baucis and Philemon

CYPRUS

Birthplace of Venus,  
goddess of love

TYRE

The Romans loved myths about legendary warriors  
and travellers – heroes like Aeneas and Ulysses, who  
faced immense challenges and lived to tell the tale.  
But they also appreciated quieter stories about love,  
hospitality and honour, such as the gentle myth of  
Baucis and Philemon.

EGYPT







