

GEORGETTA



DIANE STANLEY · PETER VENNEMA





*For my daughter Tamara,
wordsmith extraordinaire, with love*
—D. S.

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Cleopatra

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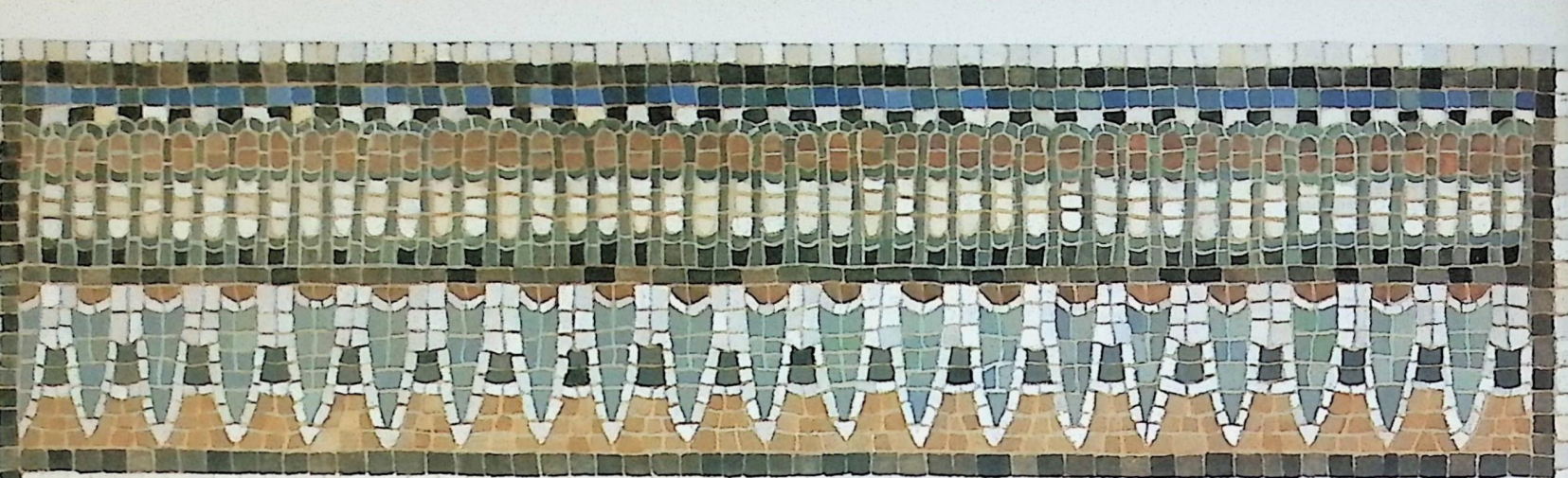
PREFACE

Many people believe that Cleopatra was one of the ancient queens of Egypt. But, in fact, she did not live in the days of the Pharaohs. When she was born, in 69 B.C., the pyramids had already been standing for more than twenty-five hundred years. She was not even Egyptian. Cleopatra was Macedonian Greek, the last of the Ptolemies, a royal line descended from a general of Alexander the Great.

Alexander had taken Egypt from the Persians in 331 B.C. He founded a new capital there in the Greek style, which he named Alexandria, after himself. When he died only eight years later, his body was returned to Alexandria for burial. His vast empire was divided up among his generals, and Egypt fell to Ptolemy, who made himself King Ptolemy I. Ptolemy wanted to rule in the style of the ancient Pharaohs. So he used their titles and claimed to be a god in human form, as they had. He also revived the custom of brother-sister marriages in the royal family.

In spite of this effort to identify with Egypt, the Ptolemies remained essentially Greek. It is a telling fact that of all the Ptolemies, only Cleopatra ever bothered to learn the Egyptian language.


At that time, Alexandria was said to be the most beautiful city in the world. But it was also a great center for learning. Poets, philosophers, and scientists



came from far and wide to study at the Museum, the forerunner of our modern universities. It was a physician in Alexandria who discovered the circulation of blood. It was there that Euclid formulated his principles of geometry. And it was an Alexandrian astronomer, brought to Rome by Julius Caesar, who gave the Egyptian calendar to the West. Cleopatra's capital had the world's finest library and its tallest building—the Pharos lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

But for all of Alexandria's grandeur and Egypt's wealth, the real power in the Western world was Rome. Unlike Egypt, ruled by god-kings, Rome had been a republic for almost five hundred years. This meant the Roman people were governed by an elected senate. Rome was a mighty military force, controlling vast territories in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Egypt, which had once conquered other lands, now lived under Rome's shadow.

At the time our story opens, Julius Caesar had effective control of Rome and all its provinces. He would soon have titles and authority unmatched in the history of the republic. Caesar and his successors, Mark Antony and Octavian, saw military conquest as a noble enterprise and dreamed of a world united under Roman rule. Cleopatra had similar goals, but she envisioned a combined empire ruled from Alexandria by the Ptolemies. And she almost succeeded. At the height of her power, Cleopatra rallied the wealth and might of Asia to her cause and made proud Rome tremble.



NOTE ON ANCIENT SOURCES

Everything we know about Cleopatra was written by her enemies. It is not surprising, then, that she was portrayed as a conniving, immoral woman. There must have been accounts of her life written by her supporters, but they have not survived. Probably the Romans destroyed them.

We know what Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Octavian looked like from the beautifully carved statues made of them. We are not so lucky where Cleopatra is concerned, for her statues were torn down. The most reliable sources for what she looked like are the many coins bearing her profile. The carving on them is crude, but we can tell how she wore her hair and that she had a prominent nose and chin.

Cleopatra's life story comes from many sources, but the dramatic episodes of her later life come mostly from Plutarch, a Greek historian. He wrote a book in which he compared the lives of famous Greeks and Romans. It is in the chapter on Mark Antony that the Queen of Egypt truly comes alive for us. No other account gives us such rich details and vivid anecdotes, and all historians who have written about her since have turned frequently to Plutarch—but with caution. First, he lived a hundred years after Cleopatra, and much of what he writes may have been mere gossip or legend. Second, many of his sources were influenced by the propaganda put forth by the conquering Octavian and his supporters. Even so, Cleopatra shines through the narrative like the exceptional woman she was, and in the end, like Caesar and Antony before him, Plutarch could not resist her.

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

GAUL

TRANSALPINE
GAUL

CISALPINE
GAUL

FURTHER
SPAIN

NEARER
SPAIN

ITALY

ILLYRICUM

CORSICA

Rome

SARDINIA

Actium
The great
battle took
place here

AFRICA

SICILY

ACHAIA
(GREECE)


NUMIDIA


MEDITERRANEAN
SEA

CYREN

Historical atlases vary in the exact boundaries of the Roman provinces. There are no accurate maps from ancient times to guide us, so mapmakers must rely on written descriptions of military campaigns. The mention of rivers, mountains, or distances traveled helps mapmakers to reconstruct the extent of Roman conquest.

Egypt and the Roman Provinces at the Accession of Cleopatra, 51 B.C.

 EGYPT

 ROME AND ITS PROVINCES

MACEDONIA
Alexander the Great
came from here

BLACK SEA

CASPIAN
SEA

ARMENIA

BITHYNIA-PONTUS

ASIA
MINOR

Ephesus

Cydnus R.

CILICIA

Tarsus

Cleopatra charmed
Mark Antony here

Tigris R.

PARTHIAN EMPIRE
Julius Caesar and
Mark Antony both
wanted to conquer
this empire; Caesar
was killed just before
leaving for Parthia, and
Antony tried to conquer
it and failed

CYPRUS

SYRIA

Cleopatra
raised an
army here to
fight her brother,
Ptolemy XIII

Euphrates R.

Cleopatra's ships
were carried across
this strip of land

JUDAEA

Alexandria

PERSIAN
GULF

Hardly anyone
lived in this part
of Egypt—most
lived on the
seacoast or
along the Nile

NABATAEA

ARABIA

Nile R.

RED
SEA
Cleopatra
had hoped to
escape to India
or Media this
way

Caesar and
Cleopatra may
have sailed up
the river this far



Cleopatra VII was eighteen years old when she became Queen of Egypt in the year 51 B.C. As was the custom, she ruled together with her brother, Ptolemy XIII, who was only ten. As was also the custom, Ptolemy became her husband. This was only a formality, though, since he was still a child.

The young king was guided by three important advisers. Since the male was traditionally the chief ruler, these three men expected to rule the country in Ptolemy's name.

But Cleopatra was strong-willed and ambitious. She longed to return her country to the glory of its earlier years. Perhaps Egypt could even regain the empire it had once had under the warlike Pharaoh Thutmose III, fourteen hundred years before. Cleopatra wanted to accomplish this herself, but Ptolemy's advisers were stronger than the young queen. By the time Cleopatra was twenty, they had driven her out of Egypt.

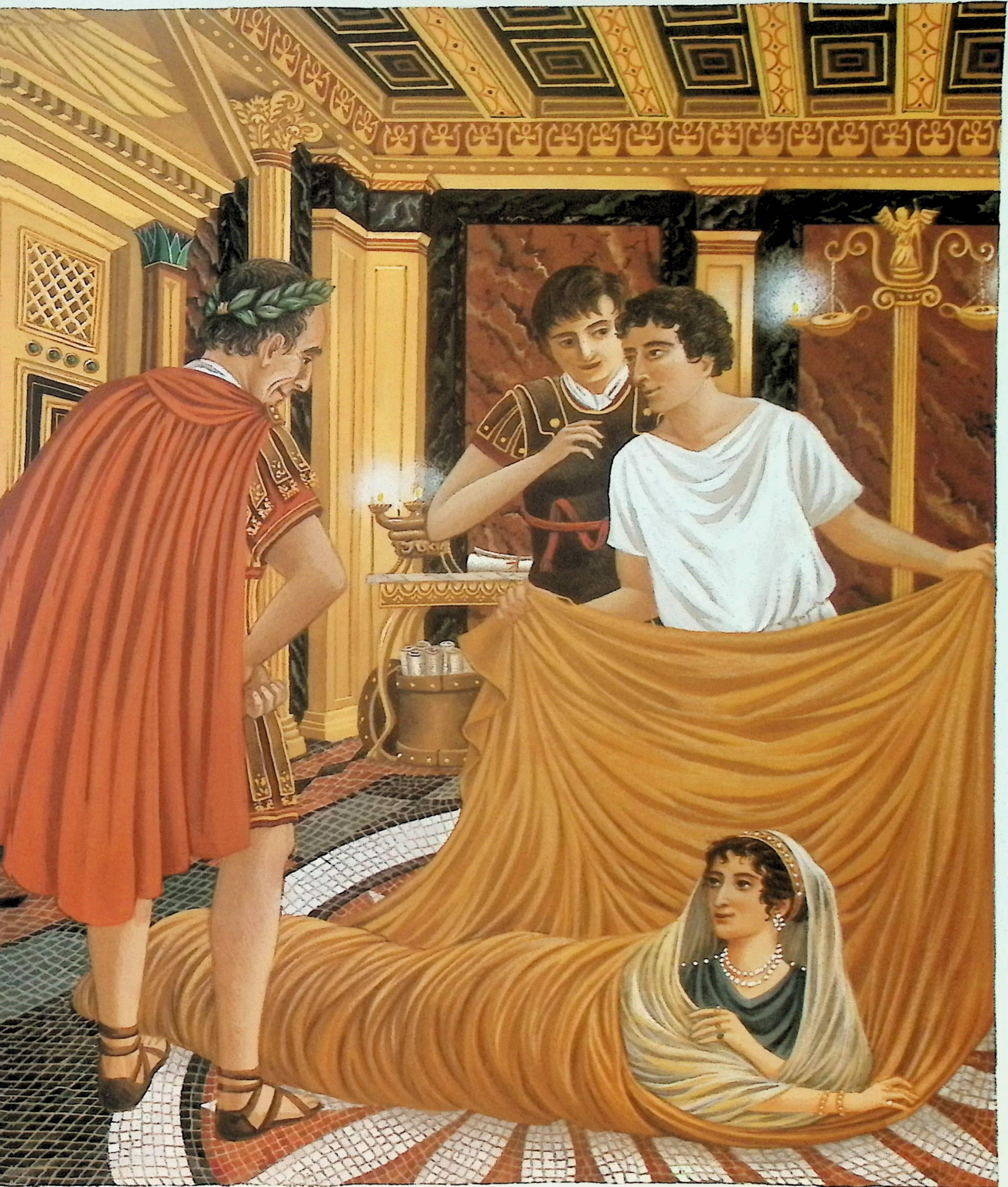




Cleopatra was determined to fight for the throne, so she raised an army in Syria and prepared to go to war against her brother. But before the battle could begin, it was interrupted by the arrival in Alexandria of Julius Caesar, the most powerful man in Rome. He was pursuing his defeated rival in a Roman civil war.

Finding his enemy already dead and Egypt on the verge of a civil war of its own, Caesar moved into the palace and tried to make peace. He sent messages to the two rulers, urging them to abandon the battle and return to Alexandria to settle their differences. Ptolemy came, but his advisers were afraid Cleopatra might win Caesar's support. So they had the palace surrounded by soldiers and ordered them to kill the queen if she tried to get in.

But Cleopatra thought of a plan. She sailed to Alexandria, anchoring the ship offshore. Then she and a man named Apollodorus took a small boat and entered the harbor at nightfall. Once they were safely ashore, Apollodorus wrapped her up in a roll of bedding (some say it was a rug) and carried her into the palace. He delivered the bedroll to Caesar—who must have been amazed and delighted when it was unrolled to reveal the queen.



That evening began one of history's great love stories. Julius Caesar, at fifty-two, was at the height of his career. He was a brilliant, brave, and confident general who had conquered much of Europe. He was probably the most famous and powerful man in the world.

Though Cleopatra was only twenty when she met this great man, she was hardly an awestruck girl. In fact, they met as equals, for she too had a brilliant mind and a fine education. She was descended from an ancient royal line and was worshiped as a goddess by her people. And the wealth of the Ptolemies was legendary.

It is traditionally believed that Cleopatra dazzled Caesar with her great beauty. Instead, it was the power of her intelligence and personality that drew him to her. According to Plutarch, "the charm of her presence was irresistible, and there was an attraction in her person and her talk, together with a peculiar force of character which pervaded her every word and action, and laid all who associated with her under its spell."

From that night, these two exceptional people lived as man and wife.

Caesar had hoped to persuade Ptolemy to settle peacefully with Cleopatra, but it came to war in the end. The next six months saw a siege of the palace, the poisoning of its drinking water, the burning of the Egyptian fleet, and battles on sea and land. At last, Ptolemy's army was defeated, and the fifteen-year-old king drowned in the Nile, weighed down by his golden armor. Cleopatra was crowned once again as queen, this time sharing the throne with her youngest brother, also named Ptolemy, who ruled as Ptolemy XIV.

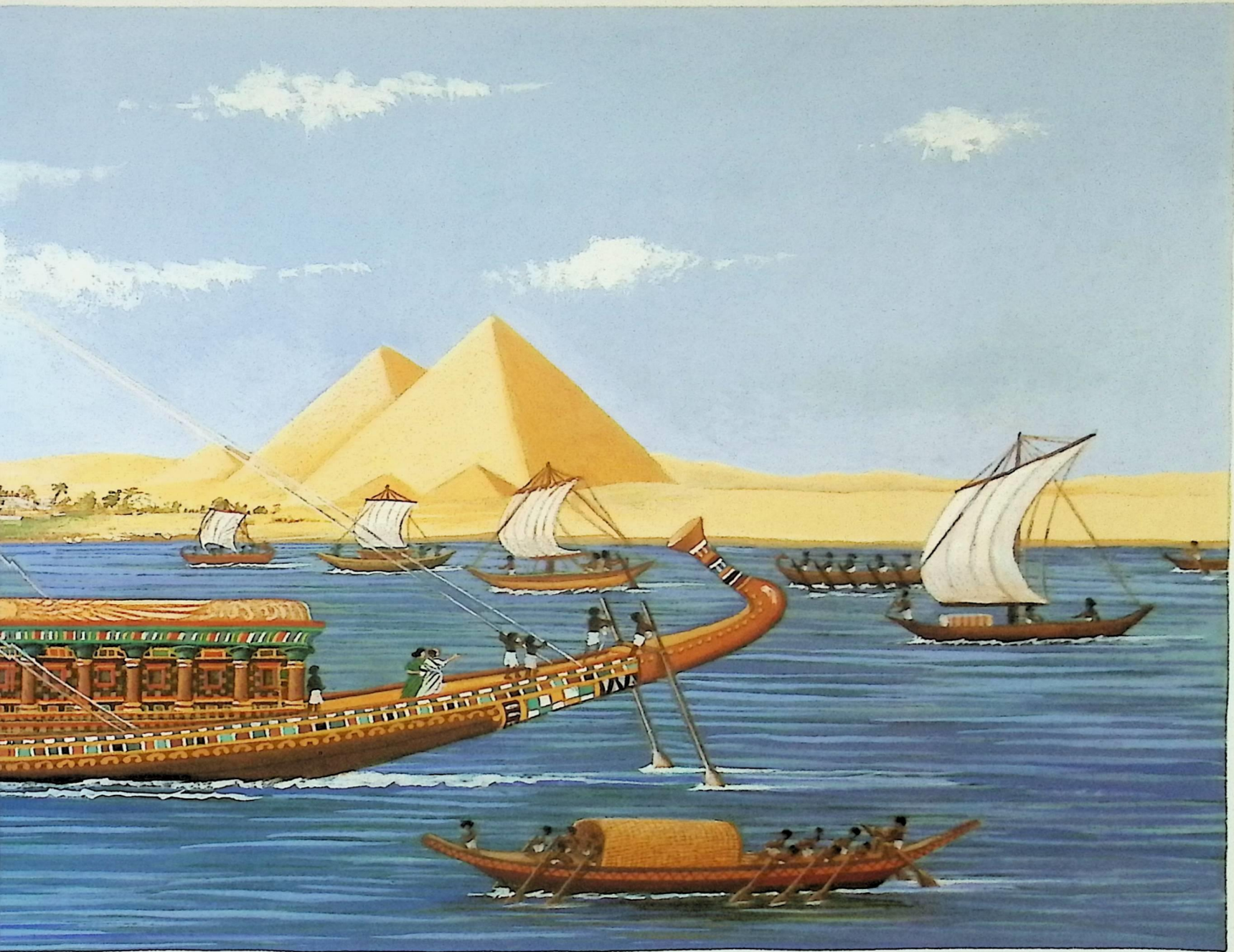






Though Caesar should have hurried back to Rome, he was eager to see more of Egypt. So Cleopatra planned a cruise up the Nile for him. The royal barge was made ready, and for many luxurious weeks they sailed upriver to view the magnificent remains of three thousand years of Egyptian culture.

This rich and fertile land and the grandeur of its ancient civilization must have stirred such an ambitious man. As powerful as he was, his country was



a republic, and he held an elected position. But to be a king, a god—that would be far better. If he were to marry this dazzling queen, between them they would control most of the known world. As her husband, he would become a divine king. Their child—soon to be born—would rule after him.

Cleopatra dreamed the same dream, but in her efforts to attain it, she would sacrifice everything.

Queen of Egypt at the age of eighteen

Cleopatra dreamed of uniting the world under Egyptian rule—and she almost succeeded. Legendary leaders Julius Caesar and Mark Antony risked their empires to win her heart, and her epic life has inspired countless tales throughout history. A timeless story of love, war, and ambition, this pictorial biography is certain to fascinate and educate.

“Makes the captivating, ultimately tragic Cleopatra seem astoundingly real.”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“Intriguing.”

—*ALA Booklist* (starred review)

“The authors have succeeded brilliantly in bringing the power and magnificence of Cleopatra and her world to life.”

—*The Horn Book*

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