

The Civil War: Part I (52-48 BC)

In 52 BC, Caesar was still in Gaul enjoying many victories and lucrative successes. However, his triumvirate partner Pompey was not having the same luck governing Rome. With the controversy surrounding Clodius' death at the hands of Milo, the city was in utter chaos and Pompey was powerless as an individual. Swayed by *Optimates* in the Senate, Pompey took actions contrary to Caesar, who was in the middle of his second 5 year term in Gaul and wanted to become consul in 48. It did not help matters that Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, died in 54 and that Crassus had been killed in Parthia.

In order for Caesar to safely enter his consulship, he must be exempt from the legal battles that were sure to arise if and when he gives up his current consulship on the assigned day (March 1, 50 BC) and enter Rome as a private citizen. Pompey attempted to derail Caesar by two measures. First, he passed a law stating that no one could run for an office *in absentia* (remember that Caesar is in Gaul and that he can't cross the *pomerium* without laying down his generalship). The second law forbade anyone who held a high office from going directly to a provincial governorship. This meant that Caesar would have to endure the time after his consulship as a civilian and out of the public eye for a full five years.

Caesar wanted to keep his province until he took over the office of consul (remember that everyone needed to campaign in Rome), so he offered a compromise. He proposed, through his henchman in the Senate, Curio, that he would lay down his command and army only if Pompey did the same. The proposal was rejected after much debate and the Senate passed a decree that named Caesar a public outlaw if he did not give up his command immediately. Pompey, because he was the alternative and the one in Rome (really near Rome, since he too was a proconsul) with legions under his control, was thrust to the forefront as Caesar's adversary and given the power to protect Rome.

Stuck in a dilemma, Caesar resolved to make the fateful crossing of the northern Roman border, the Rubicon River, and march on Rome after the tribunes fled to him and informed him of the *Senatus Consultum Ultimum*. Unfortunately, this civil war was fought for no other reason than to establish who was really in control and to maintain position. Caesar fought with his loyal army and Pompey fought with the navy, his seven legions in Spain, and the *Optimates* in Rome (led by Cato) who wanted the *status quo* and saw Caesar as an emerging tyrant.

Pompey left Italy as Caesar's quick march took over Rome. Caesar followed much of Pompey's army to Spain, defeated it, and then returned to Rome where he was elected consul in 48 BC. Later in that year, Caesar marshaled the defining victory over Pompey at Pharsalus with a smaller but better organized army. Pompey fled to Egypt but was killed upon instructions by the ruling Ptolemy.

After this victory, supporters of Pompey (among others, Cato) still rallied and many more battles were fought. Finally, the Pompeian forces were put down once and for all at Munda in 45.

Scene I: Curia (51 BC)

Senators arguing over what to do about Caesar. G. Scribonius Curio arguing for Caesar (with money falling out of his pockets), Cato arguing vehemently against Caesar, and Pompey stuck in the middle

Cato: It is Caesar or the Republic – simple as that!

Gaius Scribonius Curio: Oh, don't be so dramatic!! Look at all he's done in Gaul, and all for Rome. Even you know that!

Cato: Yeah, and he's going to bring that same military attitude into our city and rule it as the iron fisted consul!

Pompey: I....

Curio: (*Interrupting*) Oh come on!

Cato: What? Why do you think he wants to keep his command! Imagine – a consul also in charge

of an army!

Pompey: I....

Curio: (*interrupting again*) You know he only needs that because he knows that you have it in for him – as soon as he lays down that command, you are going to haul him into court and try to hang him on a thousand ridiculous charges.

Cato: Are they so ridiculous?! You know what he's done over there!

Curio: You mean subjugate an entire Gaul for the glory of Rome? Oh yes, let's bring him in, that scoundrel!!

Cato: Pompey, what are you going to do? Come on – speak!! You've been quiet long enough!

Curio: Yes, what are you going to do?

Pompey: I don't know...uhhh.... I am passing a law that no one is to run for office *in absentia* and another one that no one may enter upon a second provincial command without a five year period between the two.

Cato: Alright!!

Curio: WHAT!!!

Pompey: Ummm... of course, certain people may be exempt from these laws, I'll leave it to you to figure out whom.

Cato: Oh good Lord.....

Scene II: The Curia (two months later)

Curio: Okay, I've just been with Caesar and he thought that since I am a former consul, it would be a good idea to send me here with his dispatch. The bottom line is this: Caesar merely wants to run for consul *in absentia* while still holding onto his province. I remind my fellow Senators that the people have already granted Caesar this right, but it is not being recognized.

Marcellus: Of course! It's illegal!

Curio: Just listen, my ill-tempered friend! Caesar is prepared to give over his command of *Gallia Transalpina* and its eight legions.

Marcellus: Well, that still leaves him in command of many more and we, protecting Rome, only have 2 legions.

Curio: Okay... he'll also lay down *Gallia Cisalpina* and those two legions. He further recalls his demand for Pompey to lay down his governorship, but merely asks that he set off for his rightful place in Spain with his legions. This leaves Caesar with only *Illyricum* and one legion.

Cato: Well, that is one legion too many if he wants to pursue a candidacy. Will he lay down every one of his legions?

Curio: *Minime*.

Cato: Well then, the *Senatus Consultum Ultimum* is passed – Caesar lays down his legions, or he is an

enemy of the state and will be killed on sight. Take that to your *imperator*!!

Curio: Cato, you have just started a civil war.

Curio leaves.

Scene III: Street corner (*caupona* picture)

A woman runs across the stage yelling

Woman: He's coming! Caesar is coming! He has taken over Ariminum and just crossed the Rubicon!
Alia iacta est!! Alia iacta est!!

Woman runs offstage

Scene IV: The battlefield (Pharsalus)

Caesar and Pompey sit opposed to one another amid a fierce contest

Caesar: Pompey, you don't stand a chance!

Pompey: Are you kidding me? I've got you outnumbered!! I've got my army from Spain and the Roman naval fleet – you are as good as finished!

Caesar: Don't be too sure, my friend. Remember, I've had 5 years to whip my armies into shape and they are so well organized that they could general themselves.

Pompey: Well then, why don't you just take a vacation and let them take care of themselves, if you are so sure!

Caesar: Oh be quiet and make your move.

Pompey: C-3

Caesar: Hah! Nothing.

Pompey: Shoot!

Caesar: B-5

Pompey: You sunk my battleship!!

Caesar: Ha ha! I knew it!! Pompey, it's over! Pharsalus is mine!

Pompey: Nothing is over – I'll be back!

Pompey runs offstage

Caesar: That's what they all say.

Scene V: Alexandria, Egypt (October 2, 48 BC)

Caesar (holding his short sword) is looking all around trying to find someone – he looks in every part of the stage

Caesar: Pompey! Pompey! Come on out! I promise I won't hurt you. C'mon, you know me – Mr. Clemency! I'll be nice I promise!

Man comes in from the left side

Egyptian: Excuse me. You're Julius Caesar, right?

Caesar: Of course. Who asks?

Egyptian: I'm a courtesan of the Great Ptolemy. He heard you were here and wanted me to give you a message.

Caesar: Go on.

Egyptian: In order to show our good faith to the new ruler of Rome. The Great Ptolemy has done your work for you – Pompey is dead. Magnus was assassinated last night upon arrival.

Caesar (*looking down and like he is going to be ill*): I can't believe it. It is over. I was going to pardon him - he was a friend after all - and you have made the decision for me. Because of this, no one wins and Rome is the big loser.

Egyptian: I am sorry Caesar, we thought you would be pleased.

A woman enters

Egyptian: Julius Caesar – the Honorable Cleopatra VII.

The two shake hands

Caesar (*obviously pleased at the sight of her*): Well, HELLO!

End Play