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Designer: RockJaw Creative  
Design Manager: Matt Drew  
Senior Editor: Jenni Lazell  
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# Interview with Cleopatra & Other Famous Rulers

Written by  
**Andy  
Seed**

Illustrated by  
**Gareth  
Conway**



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# Introduction

Have you ever wanted to be the BOSS? The Big Cheese? The leader? What's it like being the head honcho who shouts out orders all day and gets to make the big decisions? Well, I have never been in charge (some would say for obvious reasons), but I wanted to know, so I set out on a MISSION.

Of course, I could have found out by asking some of today's leaders. Maybe had a prattle with a president or a chat with a chancellor. But I decided it would be FAR more interesting to talk to some emperors or queens or sultans - you know, the kind who sit on big thrones in castles and perhaps walk around with a massive sword.

There is just one teeny problem. THEY'RE ALL DEAD. It's very inconsiderate of them, I know, and they could have made it easier for me to interview them, I'm sure, but I wasn't going to let a small thing like DEATH get in the way of a good



chinwag with some of history's greatest rulers.

I set to work to solve the problem, and I had a MAHOOSIVE stroke of luck. Some of you (the good ones) may have read my other Q&A book series, beginning with *Interview with a Tiger and Other Clawed Beasts Too*. Well, to enable me talk to sharks, polar bears and giant squid I managed to invent a marvellous machine, the TRANIMALATOR. I wondered if, with a few adjustments, this could be adapted into a TIME MACHINE...



So, I swapped the device's waffle maker for a chinrest and, what do you know? It didn't work. Hitting it with a large hammer was oddly unsuccessful too. So, I did some serious research and watched nine sci-fi movies from the 1960s. Most other time-travellers it

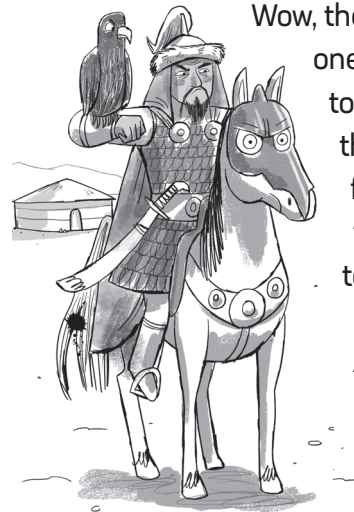
seems have some kind of alien help or the handy intervention of a mysterious asteroid. Tricky. I called a friend at NASA and she suggested firing some dark matter into a black hole during a solar storm to enable stellar flux reversal. I got my friend Baz to help - and it worked!

With my time-travelling tranimalator fully functional I've been able to zip back into the past and talk to some of history's biggest, baddest, brainiest bosses. I discovered that rulers back then could mostly just DO WHAT THEY LIKED. Some of them were really scary, others cunning and ruthlessly smart, but all were powerful. I saw riches that made me gawp, vast palaces and the rewards of plundering from conquered lands or clever trading.

I visited kings and rulers all around the world, from various periods in time and many cultures.

Wow, they were SO DIFFERENT. But all had one thing in common: a ripping story to tell. I heard from their own lips how they came to power, the troubles they faced, and what their dreams and fears were. I was amazed at what they told me, and I think you will be too.

**Andy Seed**





## — An interview with — **Cleopatra**

For this interview, I travel back to the year 32BCE, to Ancient Egypt, to meet possibly the most famous queen that ever lived...

- Q. Hello, er, Your Majesty, it's very good of you to meet me. This is exciting - I've never chatted to a pharaoh before.**
- A. I have met many strange people in my time but nothing as strange as you.**
- Q. That's because I am from the future!**
- A. So my advisers tell me... quite a claim. Well, we rulers are always eager to discover what tomorrow brings.**
- Q. Ah, you want to know the weather forecast? Hang on while I just open the app...**
- A. What is that curious object? Some kind of divining stone? An amulet?**

**Q. No, just my old smartphone.**

**A.** A what?

**Q. Er, it's a device for, well, ooh, this is going to be quite tricky to explain... Oh, no WiFi. Well, I suppose it is 32<sup>BCE</sup> and we are in the desert...**

**A.** Stranger, what exactly do you want?

**Q. May I just ask you a few questions? It won't take long.**

**A.** Hmm, very well. But if I think you're a Roman spy I will have my soldiers cut you into dog food.

**Q. Fair enough, gulp. So, er, what was your childhood like?**

**A.** I was born and brought up here in the Royal Palace in Alexandria. My father was Ptolemy XII, Pharaoh, so my childhood was not exactly ordinary.

**Q. It's a very grand building, lots of bling.**

**A.** Of course, it must be suitable for rulers of the mighty Kingdom of Egypt. And now it is mine.

**Q. Er, is that Greek you're speaking, not Egyptian?**

**A.** Correct. I speak many languages, being highly educated. We rulers use Greek because the powerful

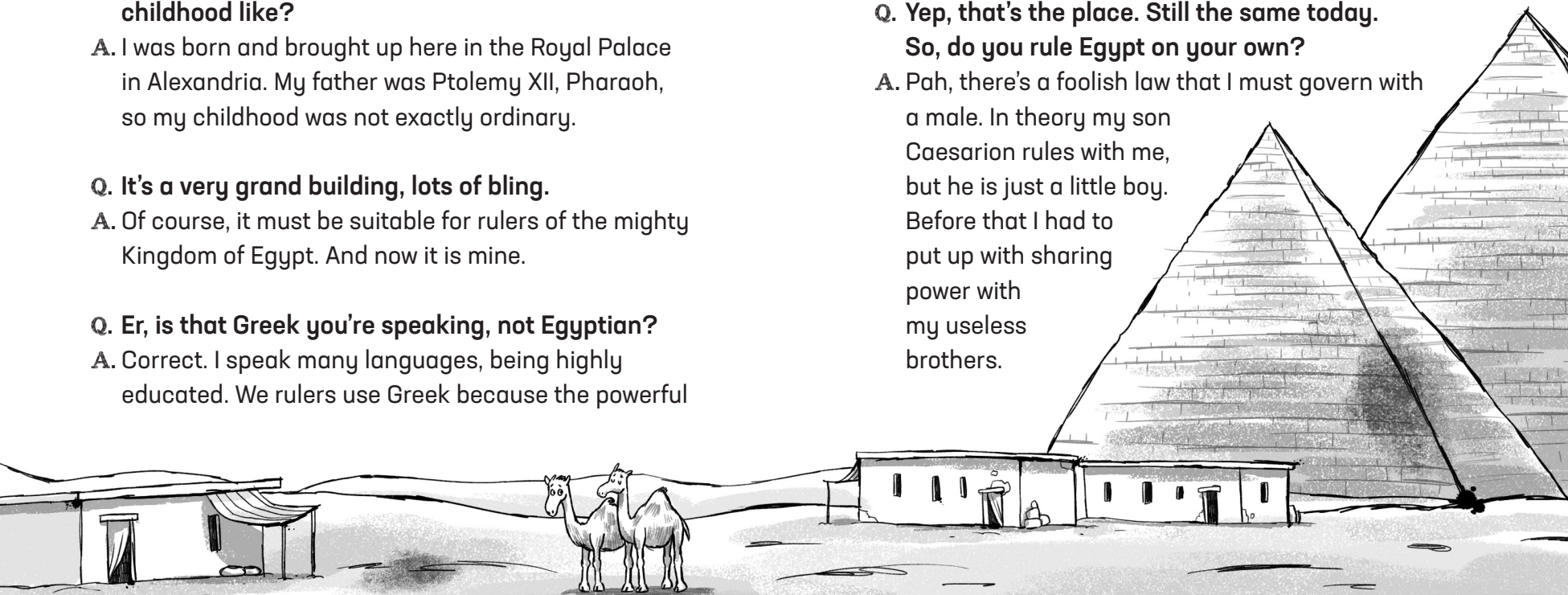
warrior Alexander the Great invaded this land 300 years ago. He brought Greek culture here, and this city is named after him. Of course, I speak Egyptian too, which is one of the reasons I'm popular - my father never bothered to learn it. Which land are you from, anyway?

**Q. I'm from Britain. It's a big island far to the north - think Stonehenge, not pyramids. Or maybe shopping centres these days.**

**A.** Ah, Britannia? Julius Caesar invaded it in 55<sup>BCE</sup>, I recall. He said it was cold and damp and the people were wild, unruly mobs with painted skin.

**Q. Yep, that's the place. Still the same today. So, do you rule Egypt on your own?**

**A.** Pah, there's a foolish law that I must govern with a male. In theory my son Caesarion rules with me, but he is just a little boy. Before that I had to put up with sharing power with my useless brothers.



**Q. Oh, I see. So, where are they now?**

**A.** Tragically they are no longer with us. They both met, erm, an unfortunate end...

**Q. Oh dear, what happened?**

**A.** It all began when my father the pharaoh died in 51BCE. I was the eldest, and cleverest, so should have ruled as queen alone, but because of tradition, my younger brother Ptolemy was made co-ruler with me, ugh.

**Q. Yeah, it's bad enough sharing sweets with your kid bro... but wait, I thought your dad was called Ptolemy?**

**A.** My father was Ptolemy XII, my brother was Ptolemy XIII. It's another tiresome tradition.

**Q. Ptolemy about it!**

**A.** What?

**Q. Oh, sorry, it's a pun - because we don't say the p... considered hilarious in later Britannia. Anyway, what happened next?**

**A.** I had to marry him.

**Q. YOUR BROTHER?**

**A.** And he was only 10.

**Q. WHATTTT! That is A SHOCKER!**

**A.** It wasn't a proper marriage. More like an old Egyptian custom.

**Q. It's still weird. Anyway, how did your mini hubby-king-brother croak?**

**A.** The fool wanted to rule alone when he was 13. Pressured by his greedy advisers, he tried to grab power and get the army on his side. I had to flee for my life.

**Q. That's teenagers for you...**

**A.** It was an outrage! I was a successful queen too, helping the country become safer and richer. I had built stores of food to guard against times of flood and drought, and I dealt with the lawless gangs of robbers that plagued the people. But Ptolemy did not last long - Rome came to my rescue. Well, Julius Caesar.

**Q. The Roman geezer! Sorry. Carry on, Cleo.**

**A.** Hmmmm. Anyway, Rome is a mighty state that rules many of the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. And just like here, there are always rival leaders trying to gain power. Sixteen years ago it was Caesar and Pompey, two strong Roman generals with soldiers behind them. Julius was gaining the upper hand so Pompey came here to Egypt, thinking he would be safe.

**Q. But he wasn't?**

**A.** Exactly. My reckless little brother saw a chance to get Caesar on his side, to help get rid of me. He sent his men to kill Pompey and cut off his head.

**Q. Yikes! What then?**

**A.** Caesar came here to Alexandria. He wanted to sort out the mess in Egypt and gain some of our famed wealth. I saw my chance to meet him and get him on my side. Of course, my brother was still in charge in the city at that point, so I had to be sneaky and clever. I got some trusted friends to hide me in a rolled-up rug and smuggle it into the palace so I could meet Caesar.

**Q. What did he say?**

**A.** Lots. I was just 21 but full of passion and ability to lead. He was impressed that I could speak Latin as

well as Greek, Egyptian and more. He soon realised I was a far better ruler than that squirt Ptolemy. So, yes, I charmed him, won him over and he agreed to help me get rid of my upstart rival.

**Q. Did Ptolemy fight?**

**A.** He tried to get his feeble army to take us on, but he was no match for my forces plus Caesar's Roman ships at the Battle of the Nile. He drowned trying to swim away in his armour...

**Q. Oo-er. So did Julius Caesar stay with you after that?**

**A.** Good question. We were a couple for a while, and even had a baby together, but he had a wife back in Rome and had to return eventually. I went there too, which was stupendously awkward...



Anyway, to make things worse, many important Romans thought Caesar was getting too powerful. A group of them hatched a plot and stabbed him to death in 44BCE.

**Q. Eek, how do you cope with all the DANGER in these times?**

**A.** A person in my position cannot escape it. Anyway, I returned to Egypt for safety, and things were quieter for a while until the next Roman general arrived.



**Q. Who was that?**

**A.** Mark Anthony. He had been a close friend of Caesar's. He came to see me and we were, er, drawn together. Having the protection of a powerful Roman

leader makes me more secure here as queen, so it was a smart move, and I liked him. Although I did have to deal with a second brother.

**Q. Another Ptolemy?**

**A.** Yes, he had a little accident with some poison, poor boy. But Mark Anthony is still here, and we are together with our three children. Egypt is now peaceful and prosperous.

**Q. No trouble at the moment then?**

**A.** Oh there's always trouble. Anthony has a rival in Rome called Octavian. It's the usual story - he wants to grab power. He's not very happy with us and has plans to come over to fight us but we can deal with him. Wait, you're from the future - you must know what happens! Do we win?

**Q. Erm, I don't know, I missed that history lesson at school. I was away with a sprained chin.**

**A.** Why don't you ask your Phartsme thing?

**Q. My smartphone? No signal, phew...**

**A.** Are you HIDING SOMETHING from me? Maybe you are one of Octavian's spies! GUARDS!

**Yeek! Come on tranimalator - take me back to drizzling Britannia, NOW!**