**Bandits and Pirates**



Figure 1 Tombsone from Prizren in Upper Moesia set up to commemorate Scerviaedus Sitaes who was killed by bandits.

*Bandits were everywhere in the Roman world; to travel anywhere – even a short distance from a major city, including Rome – was dangerous and involved serious risk of encountering bandits and other less organized groups or individuals keen on taking your money and possibly your life. There was basically no police force in the Roman Empire beyond the army, although there were local organizations dedicated (to varying degrees) to keep the peace. This meant that bandits could operate not just with little fear of instantaneous repercussions, but construct alternative societies and social structures that might sometimes challenge the Roman state. Bandit communities also proved attractive destinations for runaway slaves, as they were not particular about the free or not status of those they allowed to join. This section begins with the two bandits that, according to the Gospels, crucified alongside Jesus, just a way to show how common they are in the background of much ancient literature:*

And one of the bandits that were hanging cursed him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “”Do you not even fear God, seeing you also were condemned to this? And we indeed deserved it, for we receive the due reward of our actions: but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus said unto him, “Truly I say unto you, Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Gospel of Luke 29.33-44

*Bandits could attack anywhere and anyone, even within 70 km of Rome, as here. In the following letter from the first century CE Pliny the Younger speaks of an equestrian who had vanished along the road, despite presumably having good security and travelling with a group:*

To Hispanus.

You say that Robustus, a Roman equestrian of distinction, travelled as far as Ocriculum[[1]](#footnote-1) in the company of my friend Atilius Scaurus, and from that point nothing has been heard of him, and you ask for Scaurus to come, and, if possible, put us on the track of the missing man and help in the search. He certainly shall, but I am afraid that he will do little good, for I suspect that Robustus has met something like the same fate which befell Metilius Crispus, a fellow-townsman of mine several years ago. I had obtained a military position for him, and on his departure had presented him with 40,000 sesterces towards the purchase of his arms and ger, but I never afterwards heard from him, nor did I ever get news of his death. Whether he was waylaid by his slaves, or whether they died with him, no one knows, for certainly neither he nor any of his slaves have ever been seen since. I pray to the gods that we may not find that Robustus has met a similar fate ! However, let us hasten Scaurus's arrival. That is the least I can do in answer to your entreaties, and the very proper entreaties of the excellent young man who is showing such remarkable filial love and sagacity in trying to find his father. I do hope he may be as successful in finding him as he was in discovering in whose company he was travelling.   Farewell.

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 6.25

*The Digest of Roman Law dedicates considerable space to bandits, even defining them as a type of enemy of the state, in a sign of how seriously the Romans took this:*

118. Pomponius, On Quintus Mucius, Book II.

Those are enemies who declare war against us, or against whom we publicly declare war; others are robbers or bandits.

*Digest* 50.16.118

*It also lists the responsibilities of the governor in dealing with them:*

13. *Ulpianus, On the Office of Proconsul, Book VII*.

It is proper for every good and worthy Governor to take care that the province over which he presides is peaceable and quiet. This he will accomplish without difficulty if he exerts himself to expel bad men, and diligently seek for them, as he must apprehend all sacrilegious persons, robbers, kidnappers, and thieves, and punish each one in proportion to his crime; he should also restrain those who harbour them, as without their assistance a robber cannot long remain hidden.

*The Digest shows that bandits were tried extra ordinem by governors*

Moreover, it is provided by the imperial mandates relating to sacrilege that the Governors of provinces shall search for all sacrilegious persons, robbers, and kidnappers, and punish them according to the gravity of their offences; and it is provided by the Imperial Constitutions that sacrilege shall be punished arbitrarily, by a penalty proportioned to the crime.

*Digest* 48.13.4.2

*Bandits were often hated because they were violent, and preyed on settled communities and rural dwellers, both those who had considerable wealth and those had basically nothing:*

Another time we saw the skeleton of a bandit lying on rising ground by the roadside who had been killed by some traveller who fought off his attack. None of the locals would bury him, but in their hatred of him were glad enough to see his body consumed by the birds which, in a couple of days, ate his flesh, leaving the skeleton as if for medical demonstration.

Galen, *On Anatomical Procedures* 1.2

*However bandits also could rely on the support of locals, from whom they might be recruited. They ensured this support by means of gifts of part of their proceeds. In this extract from a novel, the hero Lucius, who has been turned into a donkey and also captured by bandits while in donkey form is being used to carry bandit loot sees just how that works:*

Around midday, under a scorching sun, we stopped in a village at a house owned by some elderly friends and acquaintances of the robbers. Even a donkey could realize they were friends as soon as they greeted each other, talked and embraced. They took some of the things from my back as presents for the old men, and in hushed whispers seemed to be telling them they were proceeds of robbery.  Then they took off the rest of the baggage, and left us to graze and wander freely in a field beside the house.

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 4.1

*Because bandits usually needed some local support to operate the state was keen on also going after those who supported and helped them:*

Tit. 16. Concerning those who harbour criminals.

1. *Marcianus, Public Prosecutions, Book II.*

The harbourers of criminals constitute one of the worst classes of offenders, for without them no criminal could long remain concealed. The law directs that they shall be punished as robbers. They should be placed in the same class, because when they can seize robbers they permit them to go, after having received money or a part of the stolen goods.

2. *Paulus, On the Punishment of Civilians.*

Persons by whom a thief, who is either their connection by affinity or their blood relative, is concealed, should neither be discharged, nor severely punished, for their crime is not as serious as that of those who conceal robbers who are in no way connected with them.

*Digest 47.16.1*

*Bandits came from many backgrounds, but many were runaway slaves, who had little alternative but to join or form new communities with other marginalized individuals, or end up being dragged back to slavery individually.*

And so the Romans noticing that the country was deserted, occupied the mountains and most of the plains and then gave them over to horse herders, cowherds, and shepherds, and by these herdsmen Sicily was many times put in great danger, because, although at first they only turned to banditry in a sporadic way, later they both assembled in great numbers and plundered the settlements, as, for example, when Eunus and his men took possession of Enna. Recently, in my own time, a certain Selurus, called the "son of Aetna," was sent up to Rome because he had put himself at the head of an army and for a long time had overrun the regions round about Aetna with frequent raids. I saw him torn to pieces by wild beasts at an appointed combat of gladiators in the Forum;[[2]](#footnote-2) for he was placed on a high scaffold, as though on Aetna, and the scaffold was made suddenly to break up and collapse, and he himself was carried down with it into cages of wild-beasts — fragile cages that had been prepared beneath the scaffold for that purpose.

Strabo, *Geography* 6.2.6

*This is how Livy described how one person became a bandit in the 140s and 130s BCE:*

In Hispania, Viriathus (who first changed from a shepherd into a hunter, then into a bandit, and soon into the leader of an army) occupied all of Lusitania, routed the army of the praetor Marcus Vetilius and captured him, after which praetor Gaius Plautius fought without any luck. This enemy inspired so much fear that a consul and his army were needed.

*Livy, Periochae* 52

*In periods and places of unrest bandits sprang up to take advantage of the situation, as during the collapse of the Republic in the first century BCE:*

32 1 This seemed to be the end of the civil wars. Octavian [Augustus] was now twenty-eight. Cities joined in placing him among their protecting gods.[[3]](#footnote-3) At this time Italy and Rome itself were openly infested with bands of bandits, whose doings were more like open plunder than secret theft. Sabinus was chosen by Octavian to correct this disorder. He executed many of the captured brigands, and within one year brought about a condition of absolute security. At that time, they say, originated the custom and system of cohorts of night watchmen still in force. Octavian excited astonishment by putting an end to this evil with such unexampled rapidity.

*Appian, Civil War* 5.132

*When he moved against bandits, Augustus moved against other groups that might form power challenges to his authority:*

32 1 Many evil practices that caused public insecurity had survived as a result of the lawless habits of the civil wars, or had even arisen in time of peace. Gangs of bandits openly went about with swords by their sides, ostensibly to protect themselves, and travellers in the country, freemen and slaves alike, were seized and kept in confinement in the slave prisons of the land owners; numerous organizations, too, were formed for the commission of crimes of every kind, assuming the title of some new guild. Therefore to put a stop to banditry, he stationed guards of soldiers wherever it seemed advisable, inspected the slave prisons, and disbanded all guilds, except such as were of long standing and formed for legitimate purposes.

Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* 32

*Some rebels might be classified as bandits so as to be more easily dismissed. Tacfarinas was a deserter from the Roman auxiliaries, who belonged to a nomadic Berber tribe from what is now modern Algeria. This tribe had rebelled in 5/6 CE, and then rebelled a second time in 17 CE under Tacfarinas, who managed to almost wipe out part of a Roman legion in 18 CE.*

52 In the course of the same year, war broke out in Africa, where the enemy was commanded by Tacfarinas. By nationality a Numidian, who had served as an auxiliary in the Roman camp and then deserted, he began by recruiting gangs of vagrants, accustomed to robbery, for the purposes of plunder and of theft: then he organized them into a body in the military style by companies and troops; finally, he was recognized as the head, not of a chaotic horde, but of the Musulamian tribe…

73 1 For Tacfarinas, in spite of many repulses, having first recruited his forces in the heart of Africa, had become so insolent he sent an embassy to [the Emperor] Tiberius, demanding nothing less than a territorial settlement for himself and his army, and threatening in the alternative a war from which there was no extrication. By all accounts, no insult to himself and the nation ever stung the emperor more than this spectacle of a deserter and bandit aping the procedure of an unfriendly power. "Even Spartacus, after the annihilation of so many consular armies, when his fires were blazing through an Italy unavenged while the commonwealth reeled in the gigantic conflicts with Sertorius and Mithridates, — even Spartacus was not accorded a capitulation upon terms. And now, at the glorious zenith of the Roman nation, was this bandit Tacfarinas to be bought off by a peace and a cession of lands?" He handed over the affair to Blaesus; who, while inducing the other rebels to believe they might sheathe the sword with impunity, was to capture the leader by any means whatsoever. Large numbers came in under the amnesty. Then, the arts of Tacfarinas were met by a mode of warfare akin to his own.

Tacitus, *Annals* Book 3.73

*In the following story (much of which seems very unlikely) set in 187 CE a bandit plots against an emperor. It might be of dubious historical value, but it does reflect the belief that bandits could strike even at the heart of the Roman state if they only became well-organized enough:*

1 But before long another plot was organized against Commodus. It involed a former soldier named Maternus, who had committed many frightful crimes.**n** He deserted from the army, persuading others to flee with him, and soon collected a huge mob of desperadoes. At first they attacked and plundered villages and farms, but when Maternus had amassed a sizable sum of money, he gathered an even larger band of cutthroats by offering the prospect of generous booty and a fair share of the loot. As a result, his men no longer appeared to be bandits but rather enemy troops.

2 They now attacked the largest cities and released all the prisoners, no matter what the reasons for their imprisonment. By promising these men their freedom, he persuaded them to join his band in gratitude for favours received. The bandits roamed over all Gaul and Spain, attacking the largest cities; a few of these they burned, but the rest they abandoned after sacking them. 3 When he was informed of these developments, Commodus, in a towering rage, sent threatening letters to the governors of the provinces involved, charging them with negligence and ordering them to raise an army to oppose the bandits. When the brigands learned that an army was being raised against them, they left the regions which they had been ravaging and slipped unnoticed, a few at a time, into Italy, by a quick but difficult route. And now Maternus was plotting for the empire, for larger stakes indeed. Since everything he had attempted had succeeded beyond his fondest hopes, he concluded that if he were to undertake something really important it was bound to succeed; having committed himself to a hazard from which it was impossible to withdraw, he would, at least, not die obscure and unknown.

4 But when he reflected that he did not have an army sufficiently powerful to resist Commodus on equal terms and in open opposition (for it was thought that the majority of the Roman people were still well disposed toward Commodus, and he also had the support of the Praetorian Guard), Maternus hoped to balance this inequality of forces by guile and cunning. This is the way he undertook to accomplish it. 5 Every year, on a set day at the beginning of spring, the Romans celebrate a festival in honor of the mother of the gods [Cybele]. All the valuable trappings of each deity, the imperial treasures, and marvellous objects of all kinds, both natural and man-made, are carried in procession before this goddess. Free license for every kind of revelry is granted, and each man puts on whatever disguise he wishes. No office is so important or so untouchable that anyone is refused permission to put on its distinctive uniform, and concealing his true identity join in the fun; consequently, it is not easy to distinguish the true from the false.

6 This [March] seemed to Maternus an ideal time to launch his plot undetected. By putting on the uniform of a praetorian soldier and dressing his allies in the same way, he hoped to mingle with the true praetorians and, after watching part of the parade, to attack Commodus and kill him while no one was on guard. 7 But the plan was betrayed when some of those who had accompanied him into the city revealed the plot, as they were pushed by jealousy to disclose it, since they preferred to be ruled by the emperor rather than by a bandit chief. Before he arrived at the scene of the festivities, Maternus was seized and beheaded, and his companions suffered the punishment they deserved. After sacrificing to the goddess and making thank offerings, Commodus completed the festivities and did honor to the goddess, rejoicing at his escape. The people continued to celebrate their emperor's safety after the festival came to an end.

Herodian, 1.10.1-7

*Like many emperors Septimius Severus declared himself an enemy to bandits and worked hard to be seen as putting them down. Unfortunately for him the following event occurred:*

4 While Severus was priding himself on this achievement, as if he surpassed all mankind in both understanding and bravery, a most incredible thing happened. A certain robber named Claudius, who was overrunning Judaea and Syria and was being very vigorously pursued in consequence, came to him one day with some horsemen, like some military tribune, and saluted and kissed him; and he was neither discovered at the time nor caught later.

*Cassius Dio, Epitome of Roman History* 75.2.4

*It wasn’t just Claudius that he had issues with, though. Bulla, another famous bandit leader, also gave him considerable trouble:*

At this period one Bulla, an Italian, got together a robber band of about six hundred men, and for two years continued to plunder Italy under the very  noses of the emperors and of a multitude of soldiers. 2 For though he was pursued by many men, and though Severus eagerly followed his trail, he was never really seen when seen, never found when found, never caught when caught, thanks to his great bribes and cleverness. For he learned of everybody that was setting out from Rome and everybody that was putting into port at Brundisium, and knew both who and how many there were, and what and how much they had with them. 3 In the case of most persons he would take a part of what they had and let them go at once, but he detained artisans for a time and made use of their skill, then dismissed them with a present. Once, when two of his men had been captured and were about to be given to wild beasts, he paid a visit to the keeper of the prison, pretending that he was the governor of his native district and needed some men of such and such a description, and in this way he secured and saved the men. 4 And he approached the centurion who was trying to exterminate the band and accused himself, pretending to be someone else, and promised, if the centurion would accompany him, to deliver the robber to him. So on the pretext that he was leading him to Felix (this was another name by which he was called), he led him into a deep valley dense with thickets, and easily seized him. 5 Later, he assumed the dress of a magistrate, ascended the tribunal, and having summoned the centurion, caused part of his head to be shaved, and then said: "Carry this message to your masters: 'Feed your slaves, so that they may not turn to robbery.' Bulla had with him, in fact, a very large number of imperial freedmen, some of whom had been poorly paid, while others had received absolutely no pay at all. 6 Severus, informed of these various occurrences, was angry at the thought that though he was winning the wars in Britain through others, yet he himself had proved no match for a robber in Italy; and finally he sent a tribune from his body-guard with many horsemen, after threatening him with terrible punishment if he should fail to bring back the robber alive. So this tribune, having learned that the brigand was intimate with another man's wife, persuaded her through her husband to assist them on promise of immunity. 7 As a result, the robber was arrested while asleep in a cave. Papinian, the prefect, asked him, "Why did you become a robber?" And he replied: "Why are you a prefect?" Later, after due proclamation, he was given to wild beasts, and his band was broken up — to such an extent did the strength of the whole six hundred lie in him.

Cassius Dio, *Epitome of Book* 57.10

**Pirates**

*Pirates were another perennial problem in the Mediterranean, especially in territory where they could hid in hidden harbours and dart out to capture passing ships. Ancient ships were vulnerable to this because they stayed close to land as much as possible, due to issues with sinking and such in the face of bad weather on the open sea.*

After the Sindic territory and Gorgipia, on the sea, there is the coast of the Achaei and the Zygi and the Heniochi, which for the most part is harborless and mountainous, being a part of the Caucasus. These peoples live by robberies at sea. Their boats are slender, narrow, and light, holding only about twenty-five people, though in rare cases they can hold thirty in all; the Greeks call them "camarae." They say that the Phthiotic Achaei in Jason's crew settled in this Achaea, but the Laconians in Heniochia, the leaders of the latter being Rhecas[3](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Strab.+11.2.12&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0198#note3) and Amphistratus, the "heniochi" of the Dioscuri,[5](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Strab.+11.2.12&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0198#note5) and that in all probability the Heniochi were named after these. At any rate, by equipping fleets of "camarae" and sailing sometimes against merchant vessels and sometimes against a country or even a city, they hold the mastery of the sea. And they are sometimes assisted even by those who hold the Bosporus, the latter supplying them with mooring places, with market place, and with means of disposing of their booty. And since, when they return to their own land, they have no anchorage, they put the "camarae" on their shoulders and carry them to the forests where they live and where they farm poor land. And they bring the "camarae" down to the shore again when the time for sailing comes. And they do the same thing in the countries of others, for they are well acquainted with wooded places, they first hide their "camarae" in these and then themselves wander on foot night and day to kidnap people. But they readily offer to release their captives for ransom, informing their relatives after they have put out to sea. Now in those places which are ruled by local chieftains the rulers go to the aid of those who are wronged, often attacking and bringing back the "camarae," men and all. But the territory that is subject to the Romans provides only little help, because of the negligence of the governors who are sent there.

Strabo, *Geography* 11.2.12

*Pirates could be well organized and surprisingly bold in seeking out targets. In the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, a philosopher and all round wise man and miracle worker, Philostratus tells of one encounter he had where he outwitted pirates who wanted to make a deal for a ship he was piloting:*

3.24 But Apollonius replied: "Since you tempt me to talk about piloting ships, I would have you hear what I consider to have been my soundest exploit at that time. Pirates at one time infested the Phoenician Sea,[[4]](#footnote-4) and were hanging about the cities to pick up information about the cargoes which different people had. The agents of the pirates spied out accordingly a rich cargo which I had on board my ship, and having taken me aside in conversation, asked me what was my share in the freight; and I told them that it was a thousand drachmas, for there were four people in command of the ship. "And," said they, "have you a house?" "A wretched hut," I replied, "on the Island of Pharos, where once upon a time Proteus used to live." "Would you like then," they went on, "to acquire a landed estate instead of the sea, and a decent house instead of your hut, and ten times as much for the cargo as you are going to get now? And to get rid of a thousand misfortunes which beset pilots owing to the roughness of the sea?" I replied that I would gladly do so, but that I did not aspire to become a pirate just at a time when I had made myself more expert than I ever had been, and had won crowns for my skill in my profession. However they persevered and promised to give me a purse of ten thousand drachmas, if I would be their man and do what they wanted. Accordingly I egged them on to talk by promising not to fail them, but to assist them in every way.

Then they admitted that they were agents of the pirates, and begged me not to deprive them of a chance of capturing the ship, and instead of sailing away to the city whenever I departed from there, they arranged that I should cast anchor under the promontory, under the lee of which the pirate ships were riding; and they were willing to swear that they would not only not kill myself, but spare the life of any for whom I interceded. I for my part did not consider it safe to reprehend them, for I was afraid that if they were driven to despair, they would attack my ship on the high seas and then we would all be lost somewhere at sea; accordingly I promised to assist their enterprise, but I insisted upon their taking oath to keep their promise truly. They accordingly made oath, for our interview took place in a temple, and then I said: "You betake yourselves to the ships of the pirates at once, for we will sail away by night." And they found me all the more plausible from the way I bargained about the money, for I stipulated that it must all be paid me in current cash, though not before they had captured the ship. They therefore went off, but I put straight out to sea after doubling the promontory."

"This then," said Iarchas, "O Apollonius, you consider the behaviour of a just man? "Why yes," said Apollonius, "and of a humane one too! For I consider it was a rare combination of virtues for one who was a mere sailor to refuse to sacrifice men's lives, or to betray  the interests of merchants, so rising superior to all bribes of money."

Life of Apollonius 3.2

*Besides causing trouble for emperors bandits stole even from the gods; the following inscription at the foot of a status records the restoration of one item after they had smashed their way into a temple to seize its treasures:*



This was set up] to a man of extraordinary goodness and integrity, Valerius Romanus, Senator, caretaker of the public goods of the most splendid colony of the Siccenses and of Venus, on account of the restoration of the statue of the goddess which was taken by bandits who had broken the walls of the temple. This statue with devoted love was set up to spread the memory of their patron through all centuries.

CIL 8.15551, Sicca Veneria, Africa Proconsularis 280-337 CE[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Greek and Roman novels are full of bandits and pirates, who are always around to abduct a hero or heroine. In the second century CE novel, the Golden Ass, the hero is turned into a donkey due to an unfortunate choice in magic ointment. While he is waiting to be restored to his human form (it requires roses), bandits, having gained access to the city he is in, burst into the house he is at and do what bandits do best: steal things, including him. (Notice how large the gang is and how well prepared they are.)*

Suddenly the doors burst open and there rushed in a gang of robbers, filling the house and surrounding every part of it with cordons of armed men, while others deployed themselves to resist the rescuers who came running from all sides. They were equipped with swords and torches, which lighted up the night; steel and flame gleamed like the rising sun. In the middle of the house there was a storeroom, strongly bolted and barred and crammed with all Milo’s treasures. This they attacked and broke into with violent blows of their axes. Having made several openings they brought out all the contents, which they quickly tied up in bundles and shared out among themselves. There was more there than they could carry, but they were not checkmated by this superfluity of riches; they hauled us two asses and my horse out of the stable, loaded us to the limit with the heavier bundles, and drove us from the ransacked house with threats and blows. Leaving one of their number behind to report on any investigation of the crime, they beat us on over untrodden mountain passes at a steady trot.

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* Book 3.28

*Lucius, the hero and narrator of the novel goes on to describe the set up that the bandits had. Notice the complexity of their arrangements and the size of the group.*

The subject and the occasion itself demand that I here set out a description of the locality and the cave that was the robbers’ abode. This will be an opportunity to put my literary talent to the proof, and also to enable you to judge accurately whether my mind and perceptions were those of an ass. There stood a mountain, wild and rugged, covered with dense woods and towering to a peak. Its steep sides, encircled by sharp and inaccessible crags, were traversed by deep ravines, full of gullies and choked with thorny vegetation; facing as they did every way they provided a natural defence. From the summit there gushed out an abundant spring which flowed down the slope in a cascade of silvery ripples; then, spreading out into many different branches, it filled the ravines with standing pools, so enclosing the whole area with a sort of landlocked sea or slow- moving river. Above the cave, on the lower slopes of the mountain, arose a high tower. By way of a wall, a stout palisade of closely woven hurdles, such as are used for sheep-pens, ran all round it, leaving a narrow entrance in front. A real bandits’ reception-room it was, believe you me. There was nothing else there but a small hut roughly thatched with reed where, as I later discovered, a sentry-group of robbers chosen by lot mounted guard each night.

One by one the robbers doubled themselves up and crept into the cave, leaving us securely tied up just outside the entrance. An old woman, bent with age, who seemed to be in sole charge of the welfare and comfort of all these young men, now appeared, and was instantly the target of violent abuse. ‘All right,’ they shouted, ‘you undertaker’s leavings, you disgrace to the human race, you reject of hell, are you going to sit there twiddling your thumbs and amusing yourself? What about some late-night refreshment to put heart into us after all our toils and dangers? All you ever do night and day is pour down neat wine without stopping for breath into that insatiable belly of yours.’ Shaking with fear the old woman answered in a piping voice: ‘But, gentlemen, my most valiant and faithful protectors, look what I’ve got waiting for you. There’s quantities of savoury stew, done to a turn, all the bread you can eat, and lashings of wine poured out into the cups, which I’ve polished up specially; and the hot water’s all ready as usual for a bath the moment you want it.’

She had hardly finished speaking before they all stripped off and

stood naked; after reviving themselves in the warmth of a blazing

fire, they washed thoroughly in the hot water and rubbed themselves down with oil. Then they took their places at a dinner-table heaped high with good things. They had scarcely done so when there arrived a much larger group of men, also robbers as anybody could see, since like the others they carried in a mass of booty - gold and silver coin and plate, and gold-embroidered silks. After likewise bathing and refreshing themselves, they joined their comrades at table, and some, chosen by lot, served the meal. As they ate and drank, it was every man for himself: they put away meat in mounds, bread in heaps, and wine non-stop by the gallon. Shouts and jests, talking and singing, abuse and badinage, were the order of the day - it was the Lapiths and Centaurs[[6]](#footnote-6) all over again.

In the middle of all this, one of them, the burliest of the lot, began to give a speech. ‘Here’s to us!’ he proclaimed. ‘We gallantly stormed the house of Milo of Hypata, we’ve a heap of booty won by our courage, and on top of that we’ve got back to base without losing a man - and, f it comes to that, with eight more feet on the strength. As for the rest of you, the Boeotian towns contingent, you’ve come back with heavy casualties and without your brave leader Lamachus, though I’d rate his life as more valuable than this stuff you’ve brought. What did for him, however it happened, was that he was too brave for his own good. But he was a hero, who will be held in remembrance and honour along with the great kings and generals of legend; whereas you, model brigands that you are, just go sneaking furtively round bath-houses and old women’s hovels, ignominiously filching bits of rubbish for your flea-market.’ The challenge was immediately taken up by one of the second group. ‘You know perfectly well,’ he answered, ‘that large houses are much easier targets. That’s because, even though there are slaves all over a large house, every one is more concerned to look after himself than to safeguard his master’s possessions. Simple people who live on their own, if they have any property, large or small, keep it dark, hide it away, and guard it fiercely, defending it with their lives. What happened to us will bear out what I’m saying. Directly we arrived at seven-gated Thebes we carried out the first step of our professional drill, a careful reconnaissance of the wealth of the locals. We found out that there was an enormously rich banker called Chryseros who took great pains to conceal his opulence for fear of being landed with the expense of public office. He lived on his own in seclusion, making do with a small but well-secured little house, sleeping in dirt and rags on bags of gold. So we decided to attack him first, scouting the idea of serious resistance from a lone individual and expecting to carry off all his wealth without exerting ourselves.

10 ‘That very night, as soon as it was dark, we mustered in front of the house. We decided not to try to slip the bolts or force the door, let alone break it down, since the noise might rouse the neighbourhood, when we should be done for. Then it was that our noble leader Lamachus, confident in his tried and tested courage, stealthily inserted his hand into the keyhole, intending to wrench the bar loose by force. But meanwhile, if you please, that blot on the human race Chryseros had been awake and taking it all in, and now, slowly creeping up with noiseless footsteps in total silence, he suddenly with one mighty blow fastened our leader’s hand to the panel of the door by a huge nail. Then, leaving him there fatally crucified, he climbed to the roof of his hovel and shouted at the top of his voice to summon the neighbours; calling each one by name he gave out that his house had suddenly caught fire, reminding them that this involved the safety of them all. So everybody, frightened by the danger next door, came running in alarm to help.

11 ‘Now we found ourselves faced with two equally painful alternatives, to let ourselves be captured or to desert our comrade. On the spur of the moment we hit on a drastic solution: with one carefully directed blow we cut our leader’s arm right off at the elbow joint, and leaving the rest of it there we tied up the wound with a thick bandage so that there should be no trail of blood to show which way we went, and hurriedly made off with what remained of Lamachus. We desperately wanted to do our duty by him, but we were hurried into headlong flight by the menacing roar of the crowd and fear of the danger that threatened us, while he could neither keep up with us nor be safely left behind. That hero, lofty of soul and preeminent in courage, repeatedly begged and prayed and tearfully adjured us, by the right hand of Mars, by our oath of loyalty, to save a faithful comrade from both torture and capture. How could a brave bandit outlive the loss of his hand, which was his only means of plunder and murder? He would count himself supremely lucky to die willingly by a comrade’s hand. But when nothing he could say would induce any of us to commit this self-elected parricide, he drew his sword with his other hand, kissed it lingeringly, and with a mighty thrust drove it straight into his heart. Then we, having paid tribute to our great-hearted leader’s valour, wrapped what remained of him carefully in a linen sheet and entrusted it to the sea to hide. And so now our Lamachus is at rest with a whole element as his tomb.

12 ‘He then ended his life in a manner worthy of his manly virtues. Alcimus, however, could not persuade cruel Fortune to favour his cunning enterprise. He had broken into an old woman’s hovel while she was asleep and gone upstairs into her bedroom; but instead of disposing of her then and there by throttling her as he should have done, he chose to throw out her things item by item through the window, which was a largeish one, for us to carry off - at least that was the idea. Having done a thorough job of heaving everything else out, he decided even to include the bed where the old girl was lying asleep. So he tipped her out of it and pulled off the bedclothes, which he was just going to send down after the rest, when the old bitch fell at his feet and pleaded with him: “Look, my son, why are you making a present of a poor old woman’s miserable ragged bits and pieces to my rich neighbours? It’s their house that this window overlooks. Hearing this, Alcimus was taken in by her cunning ruse and believed every word she said. Of course he was alarmed by the thought that not only what he had already thrown out but also what he had been going to throw out before he realized his mistake might be finding its way, not to his comrades, but into somebody else’s house. So he craned out of the window to have a good look round, particularly to try to assess the wealth of this next-door house that the old woman talked of. This was an enterprising but imprudent move; while he was in this precarious position, with no eyes for anything but what he was looking at, the evil old hag gave him a sudden and unexpected push; feeble as it was, it was enough to send him hurtling down head first. This was from a considerable height, and also he fell on a large stone which lay underneath. His rib-cage was shattered and split open, and he vomited up torrents of blood from deep inside him; he did not suffer long, but died after telling us what had happened. We buried him as we had Lamachus, a worthy attendant on his leader.

13 ‘Discouraged by this double bereavement we now abandoned our Theban campaign and went on up to Plataea, the nearest town. There we found everybody talking about someone called Demochares and the gladiatorial show he was going to put on. He was a man of noble birth, enormously rich and correspondingly generous, who was in the habit of providing popular entertainments of a splendour that matched his fortune. It would take more wit and eloquence than I am master of to do justice to each and every aspect of all his various preparations. There were gladiators renowned for their fighting prowess, hunters of proven speed and agility, and desperate criminals

with nothing to lose who were being fattened up to fatten the beasts in their turn. There was an elaborate timber structure of several stories like a movable house, and brighdy decorated enclosures for the wild-beast show. The number and variety of the animals beggared description, for Demochares had gone to endless trouble to import exotic species to serve as tombs for the condemned. On top of the rest of the outfit for this splendid show he had pretty well used up everything he possessed in procuring a large number of huge bears. Some of these had been caught locally, some bought for vast sums, and some were contributed by the competitive generosity of different friends; all of them he was feeding and looking after with no expense spared.

14 ‘However, these fine and lavish preparations to entertain the public did not escape the baleful glance of Envy. The bears, exhausted by their prolonged captivity, wilting in the summer heat, and enfeebled by lack of exercise, were attacked by a sudden infection to which nearly every one of them succumbed. On pretty well every street you could see the stranded corpses of these beasts lying half dead. The common people, whose life of squalid poverty forbade them to be fastidious in matters of diet and who had perforce to stay their shrunken stomachs with whatever free food they could find, however repellent, naturally fell on this feast which lay there for the taking. Seeing this, Eubulus here and I hit on an ingenious plan. Choosing a particularly large specimen, we carried off one of the bears to our hideout as if to prepare it for eating. There we skinned it neatly, taking special care to preserve the claws, and leaving the animal’s head intact down to the neck-line; we scraped down the whole skin thoroughly, sprinkled it with fine ash, and laid it in the sun to dry. While the moisture was being drawn out of it by the blazing heat, we meanwhile had a fine feed on the meat and issued orders for the coming operation. It was decided that one of us, not just the strongest, but also the bravest, and who above all must be a volunteer, should dress in the bear’s skin, and in that guise get himself introduced into Demochares’ house. Then, at the right moment, at dead of night, it would be easy for him to open the door and let us in.

15 ‘Excited by this ingenious scheme many of our valiant brotherhood volunteered for the assignment. Of these Thrasyleon was chosen by popular acclaim to brave the dangers of this perilous stratagem; and, the skin being now pliant and soft to handle, he got into it with a cheerful expression. Then with minute stitches we sewed together the edges of the skin, covering over the seam, which in fact was scarcely noticeable, with the thick hair which surrounded it. We got Thrasyleon to push his head up through the top end of the animal’s gullet where the neck had been hollowed out, and made small holes near the nostrils and eyes for him to see and hear through. Then we took our brave comrade, now every inch a bear, to a cage which we had picked up cheap, and into this he immediately marched with strong and steadfast step.

*As you might imagine, things do not go quite as planned. But at least the costume is found convincing and the bandits go and wait for their chance to get at the loot:*

18 As we emerged from the city-gate we noticed a large tomb standing at some distance from the road in a retired and unfrequented spot. We found there a number of mouldering and half-closed coffins, the dwelling-places of men long turned to dust and ashes, and some of these we opened up as hiding- places for the booty we were expecting. In accordance with professional practice we waited for the moon to set, the time when sleep, mounting its first and most vigorous offensive, attacks and overpowers the minds of men. Then, when the time came, our party armed itself and mustered outside Demochares’ front door to keep our appointment with plunder. Thrasyleon was equally punctual in picking the exact time of night for banditry. Creeping out of his cage he lost no time in dispatching with his sword every one of the attendants who were sleeping nearby. Then he dealt similarly with the doorkeeper, and possessing himself of the man’s key he opened the doors for us. In a moment we were inside and had taken complete possession of the house, and he was showing us the strongroom, where he had been quick to note a quantity of silver plate being put away the evening before. We at once broke it open by a concerted charge, and I told off the rest of the party to take as much gold or silver as they could carry and entrust it quickly to the incorruptible safekeeping of the dead, and then to come back at the double for another load. I meanwhile would act in the general interest by taking up a position near the front door and keeping a careful lookout in all directions while they were away - for I thought that the sight of the bear careering around the house would be enough to deter any of the household we might happen to wake up. Anybody, however strong and brave, encountering such a huge beast, especially at dead of night, would certainly take to his heels, lock the door of his room in a panic, and stay there. ‘All this sound and careful planning, however, was thwarted by Success. While I was on tenterhooks waiting for my comrades to return, a slave, woken up I suppose by the noise - no doubt divine influence was at work - quietly emerged and saw the bear running about all over the house. Without making a sound he withdrew and managed to pass on what he had seen to the entire household. Within seconds the whole place was filled with hordes of slaves. The darkness vanished in a blaze of light from torches, lamps, tapers, candles, and everything else you can think of. Every man jack of them emerged with a weapon of some kind; each one equipped with a cudgel or a spear or even a drawn sword, they blocked off all the entrances. At the same time they were sicking on their hunting-dogs - long-eared shaggy brutes - to bring the beast down.

20 As the uproar grew I began to beat a gradual retreat, but as I was hiding behind the door I had a fine view of the wonderful show that Thrasyleon was putting up against the dogs. Though he knew his last hour had come, he remained true to himself, his comrades, and the courage which never left him, fighting back with the jaws of Cerberus yawning before him. Indeed, as long as the breath was in his body he kept up the role for which he had volunteered: with various bear like postures and movements he would now retreat, now stand at bay, until finally he managed to get clear of the house. However, even in the open street he could not escape, for all the dogs from the neighbourhood - a large and ferocious pack - appeared in a body to join forces with the hunting-dogs, who had likewise followed hot on his heels. It was a grim and pitiful spectacle to see our friend Thrasyleon surrounded and beset by these packs of ravening dogs and torn apart by innumerable bites. ‘Finally I couldn’t bear this painful sight any longer, and worming my way into the milling crowd I tried to assist my comrade discreetly in the only way possible by dissuading the leaders of the hunt. “This is an outrage!” I shouted. “This is a magnificent animal, and a aluable one, that we’re destroying.”

21. However, my artful intervention did not help my unfortunate friend, for there now ran out of the house a tall strong fellow who without a moment’s hesitation thrust a spear right into the bear’s guts. Another immediately followed suit, and then several more mastered their fears and competed with each other to come to close quarters and plunge in their swords. As for Thrasyleon, the pride and glory of our band, his great spirit, ever worthy to be held in honour, was finally taken by storm, but there was no surrender. True to his oath he let no human cry or scream escape him, but horribly mauled and grievously wounded as he was he went on bellowing and growling like a beast, and endured his inevitable doom with noble fortitude. And so his life he surrendered to destiny, but his glory he kept for himself. However, so great was the terror and awe that he had inspired in the mob that it was dawn - broad day, indeed - before anybody dared even to touch the beast, motionless as it was. Finally in fear and trembling a butcher, more daring than the rest, slit open the beast’s belly and stripped our hero of his bear’s skin. Thus Thrasyleon was lost to us, but in his glory he will live on. The rest of us hurriedly packed up the bundles which the faithful dead had been guarding for us and left the territory of Plataea by forced marches. On our way we pondered in our minds this fact: it is no wonder that Good Faith is nowhere to be found in this life, for she has gone to live among the spirits of the dead in disgust at human perfidy. And so, every man worn out with our heavy loads and the rough road, and mourning the loss of three comrades, we have brought back the booty you see.’

22 At the end of this story they pledged the memory of their dead comrades in arms in neat wine drunk from gold cups; then they sang some hymns to Mars to propitiate him, and went to sleep for a while. To us the old woman doled out quantities of fresh barley without stint. My horse thought this generous spread, which he had all to himself, a real Salian banquet. As for me, I had only ever eaten barley finely milled and in the form of porridge, so I investigated the corner where the surplus bread was stored, and there I gave my jaws, which had become enfeebled and cobwebbed from long fasting, a good work- out. But then late at night the robbers woke up and took the field again; variously equipped, some armed with swords, some got up as ghosts, they marched off at a smart pace.

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* Book 4

**Pirates**

*Pirates were a serious threat in the ancient Mediterranean. This was especially true in any period of political instability, such as when the Romans destroyed many of the Hellenistic powers that had ruled various along the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean since the conquests of Hellenistic Greece in the 200-100s BCE. Eventually the pirates became miniature states almost in their own right – and even managed to take advantage of chaos in the 80-30s BCE in Rome.*

24 1 The power of the pirates had its seat in Cilicia at first, and at the outset it was daring and elusive, but it took on confidence and boldness during the Mithridatic war[[7]](#footnote-7), because it lent itself to the king's service. 2 Then, while the Romans were embroiled in civil wars at the gates of Rome, the sea was left unguarded, and gradually drew and enticed them on until they no longer attacked sailors only, but also devastated islands and maritime cities. And presently men whose wealth gave them power, and those whose lineage was illustrious, and those who laid claim to superior intelligence, began to embark on piratical craft and share their enterprises, feeling that the occupation brought them a certain reputation and distinction. 3 There were also fortified stopping points and signal-stations for pirates in many places, and fleets put in here which were not merely fitted out for their work with sturdy crews, skilful pilots, and light and speedy ships; but even more annoyingly than the fear which they inspired was the odious extravagance of their equipment, with their gilded sails, and purple awnings, and silvered oars, as if they enjoyed their iniquity and prided themselves upon it. 4 Their flutes and stringed instruments and drinking bouts along every coast, their seizures of persons in high command, and their ransomings of captured cities, were a disgrace to the Roman supremacy. For, you see, the ships of the pirates numbered more than a thousand, and the cities captured by them four hundred. 5 Besides, they attacked and plundered places of refuge and sanctuaries before untouchable, such as those of Claros, Didyma, and Samothrace; the temple of Chthonian Earth at Hermione; that of Asclepius in Epidaurus; those of Poseidon at the Isthmus, at Taenarum, and at Calauria; those of Apollo at Actium and Leucas; and those of Hera at Samos, at Argos, and at Lacinium. They also offered strange sacrifices of their own at Olympus, and celebrated there certain secret rites, among which those of Mithras continue to the present time, having been first instituted by them.[[8]](#footnote-8)

6 But they piled the most insults upon the Romans, even going up from the sea along their roads and plundering there, and sacking the neighbouring villas. Once, too, they seized two praetors, Sextilius and Bellinus, in their purple-edged robes, and carried them away, together with their attendants and lictors. They also captured a daughter of Antonius, a man who had celebrated a triumph, as she was going into the country, and exacted a large ransom for her. But their crowning insolence was this. 7 Whenever a captive cried out that he was a Roman and gave his name, they would pretend to be frightened out of their senses, and would strike their thighs, and fall down before him entreating him to pardon them; and he would be convinced of their sincerity, seeing them so humbly suppliant. Then some would put Roman boots on his feet, and others would throw a toga round him, in order, they said, that there might be no mistake about him again. 8 And after thus mocking the man for a long time and getting their fill of amusement from him, at last they would let down a ladder in mid ocean and bid him disembark and go on his way rejoicing; and if he did not wish to go, they would push him overboard themselves and drown him.

*As a result Pompey the Great was set in charge of putting down the pirates across the Mediterranean in the 67-66 BCE. He had basically no restrictions on his power during that period, and managed to crush them – or at least give the illusion of that – in a very short period:*

3 Pompey divided the waters and the adjacent coasts of the Mediterranean Sea into thirteen districts, and assigned to each a certain number of ships with a commander, and with his forces thus scattered in all quarters he encompassed whole fleets of piratical ships that fell in his way, and straightway hunted them down and brought them into port; others succeeded in dispersing and escaping, and sought their hive, as it were, hurrying from all quarters into Cilicia. Against these Pompey intended to proceed in person with his sixty best ships. 4 He did not, however, sail against them until he had entirely cleared of their pirates the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Libyan Sea, and the sea about Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily, in forty days all told. This was owing to his own tireless energy and the zeal of his lieutenants.

27 1 But the consul Piso at Rome, out of rage and envy, was interfering with Pompey's equipment and discharging his crews; Pompey therefore sent his fleet round to Brundisium, while he himself went up by way of Tuscany to Rome. On learning of this, the citizens all streamed out into the road, just as if they had not escorted him forth only a few days before. 2 What caused their joy was the unhoped for rapidity of the change, the market being now filled to overflowing with provisions. As a consequence Piso came near being deprived of his consulship, and Gabinius had the requisite law already written out. But Pompey prevented this, as well as other hostile acts, and after arranging everything else in a reasonable manner and getting  what he wanted, went down to Brundisium and set sail. 3 But though his immediate business was urgent and he sailed past other cities in his haste, still, he could not pass Athens by, but went up into the city, sacrificed to the gods, and addressed the people. Just as he was leaving the city, he read two inscriptions, each of a single verse, addressed to him, one inside the gate:—

|  |
| --- |
| "As you know you are mortal, in so far you are a god;"  |

and the other outside:—

|  |
| --- |
| "We awaited, we saluted, we have seen, and now conduct you forth."  |

4 Some of the pirate bands that were still rowing at large begged for mercy, and since he treated them humanely, and after seizing their ships and persons did them no further harm, the rest became hopeful of mercy too, and made their escape from the other commanders, betook themselves to Pompey with their wives and children, and surrendered to him. All these he spared, and it was chiefly by their aid that he tracked down, seized, and punished those who were still lurking in concealment because conscious of unpardonable crimes.

28 1 But the most numerous and powerful had bestowed their families and treasures and useless folk in forts and strong citadels near the Taurus mountains, while they themselves manned their ships and awaited Pompey's attack near the promontory of Coracesium in Cilicia; here they were defeated in a battle and then besieged. At last, however, they sent suppliant messages and surrendered themselves, together with the cities and islands of which they were in control; these they had fortified, making them hard to get at and difficult to take by storm. 2 The war was therefore brought to an end and all piracy driven from the sea in less than three months, and besides many other ships, Pompey received in surrender ninety which had brazen beaks. The men themselves, who were more than twenty thousand in number, he did not once think of putting to death; and yet to let them go and suffer them to disperse or band together again, poor, warlike, and numerous as they were, he thought was not well. 3 Reflecting, therefore, that by nature man neither is nor becomes a wild or an unsocial creature, but is transformed by the unnatural practice of vice, whereas he may be softened by new customs and a change of place and life; also that even wild beasts put off their fierce and savage ways when they partake of a gentler mode of life, he determined to transfer the men from the sea to land, and let them have a taste of gentle life by being accustomed to dwell in cities and to till the ground. 4 Some of them, therefore, were received and incorporated into the small and half-deserted cities of Cilicia, which acquired additional territory; and after restoring the city of Soli, which had lately been devastated by Tigranes, the king of Armenia, Pompey settled many there. To most of them, however, he gave as residence Dyme in Achaea, which was then bereft of men and had much good land.

29 1 Well, then, his critics found fault with these measures, and even his best friends were not pleased with his treatment of Metellus in Crete.  Metellus, a kinsman of the Metellus who was a colleague of Pompey in Spain, had been sent as general to Crete before Pompey was chosen to his command; for Crete was a kind of second source for pirates, next to Cilicia. Metellus hemmed in many of them and was killing and destroying them. 2 But those who still survived and were besieged sent suppliant messages to Pompey and invited him into the island, alleging that it was a part of his government, and that all parts of it were within the limit to be measured from the sea. Pompey accepted the invitation and wrote to Metellus putting a stop to his war. He also wrote the cities not to pay any attention to Metellus, and sent them one of his own officers as general, namely, Lucius Octavius, 3 who entered the strongholds of the besieged pirates and fought on their side, thus making Pompey not only odious and oppressive, but actually ridiculous, since he lent his name to godless miscreants, and threw around them the mantle of his reputation to serve like a charm against evil, through envy and jealousy of Metellus. 4 For not even Achilles played the part of a man, men said, but that of a youth wholly crazed and frantic in his quest of glory, when he made a sign to the rest which prevented them from striking Hector, “Lest some one else win honour by the blow, and he come only second"; 5 whereas Pompey actually fought in behalf of the common enemy and saved their lives, that he might rob of his triumph a general who had toiled hard to win it. Metellus, however, would not give in, but captured the pirates and punished them, and then sent Octavius away after insulting and abusing him before the army.

Suetonius, *Life of Pompey* 24-29

*Julius Caesar was captured by pirates in 75 BCE. As was usual when they captured those they could get more money for in ransom than as slaves, they allowed him to send out people to try and raise the money for him.*

2.1 First, when the pirates demanded a ransom of twenty talents, Caesar burst out laughing. They did not know, he said, who it was that they had captured, and he volunteered to pay fifty. 2 Then, when he had sent his followers to the various cities in order to raise the money and was left with one friend and two slaves among these Cilicians, nearly the most bloodthirsty people in the world, he treated them so highhandedly that, whenever he wanted to sleep, he would send to them and tell them to stop talking. 3 For thirty-eight days, with the greatest nonchalance, he joined in all their games and exercises, just as if he was their leader instead of their prisoner. 4 He also wrote poems and speeches which he read aloud to them, and if they failed to admire his work, he would call them to their faces illiterate savages, and would often laughingly threaten to have them all hanged. They were much taken with this and attributed his freedom of speech to a kind of simplicity in his character or boyish playfulness.5 However, the ransom arrived from Miletus and, as soon as he had paid it and been set free, he immediately manned some ships and set sail from the harbour of Miletus against the pirates. He found them still there, lying at anchor off the island, and he captured nearly all of them. 6 He took their property as spoils of war and put the men themselves into the prison at Pergamon. He then went in person to [Marcus] Junius, the governor of Asia, thinking it proper that he, as praetor in charge of the province, should see to the punishment of the prisoners. 7 Junius, however, cast longing eyes at the money, which came to a considerable sum, and kept saying that he needed time to look into the case. Caesar paid no further attention to him. He went to Pergamon, took the pirates out of prison and crucified the lot of them, just as he had often told them he would do when he was on the island and they imagined that he was joking.

Plutarch, *Julius Caesar* 2.1-7

*Pirates – along with bandits - were, as I said, a feature of Roman and Greek novels. They also appeared a lot in education,[[9]](#footnote-9) with young men being asked to pretend often to represent young men who had been captured by pirates, became their leaders, and then rescued their fathers in unexpected ways.*

This is the reason, in my opinion, why young men grow up such idiots in the schools, because they neither see nor hear one single thing connected with the usual circumstances of everyday life, nothing but stuff about pirates lurking on the seashore with fetters in their hands, tyrants issuing edicts to compel sons to cut off their own fathers' heads, oracles in times of pestilence commanding three virgins or more to be sacrificed to stay the plague…

Petronius, *Satyricon* 1

1. A town only about 70 km north of Rome. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Although we associate gladiatorial games and executions with the Colosseum, before that was built these events were held in a variety of locations, including the Forum. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cities had protecting gods and goddesses who were called upon in times of need; many after Augustus’ victory at Actium added him to that number in what was probably a wise decision. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The sea close to Lebanon and Judea. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Image source and original inscription from: <http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/database/detail-base.php?record=LSA-2454> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A famous mythical banquet where alcohol led to some *very* bad outcomes. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Romans fought three wars with King Mithradates of Pontus in the first century BCE, winning them all, but at quite great cost. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Mithras was an Eastern God who became very popular in the Roman army. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. We have lots of these in Seneca the Elder’s *Controversiae,* if that interests you. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)