

Helena Kraljič

# Cleopatra

Illustrated by Peter Škerl



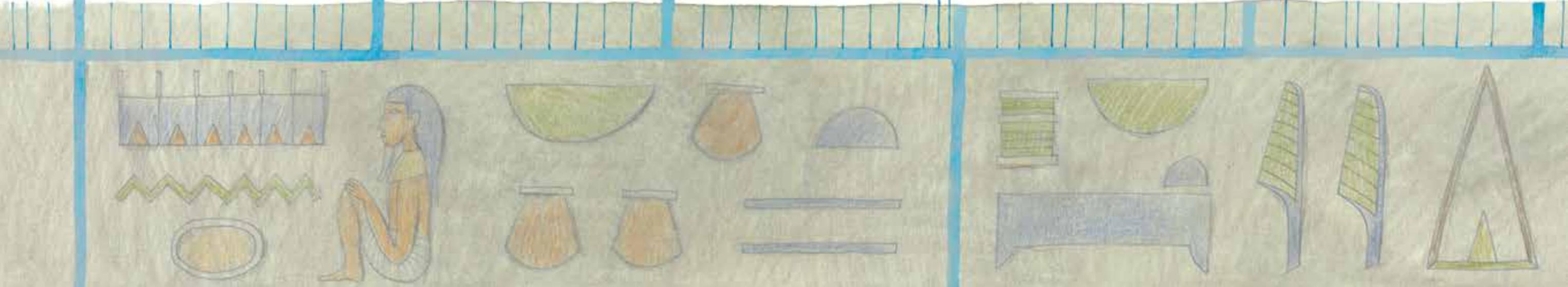
3000 B.C.

2000 B.C.

1000 B.C.

Cleopatra VII. 51-30 B.C.

O



Helena Kraljič

There are hardly any among us who have not yet heard of the magnificent Pyramid of Cheops in Giza, one of the Seven Wonders of the Old World; or the story of the young pharaoh Tutankhamun and the riches of his tomb in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor; not to mention the story of the splendid queen Cleopatra - all mere moments of a life which, with a touch of literary freedom, is picturesquely represented in this little book.

When we think of the name Cleopatra, we are most likely referring to the Egyptian queen Cleopatra VII Philopator, the last queen of Egypt before it became the exclusive property of Rome. She was of Greek-Macedonian descent, and the last member of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, which ruled the land from 305 BC until 30 BC, and the daughter of the Egyptian king Ptolemy XII Auletes. After his death in 51 BC, she and her younger brother Ptolemy XIII both took the throne in Egypt, as sibling reign was common at the time. Ptolemy XIII, whose rule was by far less influential, lost his life in the war with the Roman army under Gaius Julius Caesar. Cleopatra's younger brother, Ptolemy XIV then became Egypt's co-sovereign. After his death, which Cleopatra is also believed to have been involved in, she chose as co-sovereign her son Caesarion or Ptolemy XV. Caesarion was the offspring of her affair with Caesar. She ended her life at 39 years, when she chose death rather than to endure the humiliation of attending Octavius' triumph after his conquest of Alexandria.

So say the basic facts about her life. Additionally, her life and death are shrouded in veils of romantic stories, and it is often no longer possible to separate with a significant degree of certainty what is fact and what is myth. In spite of this, recordkeepers of her life almost unanimously agree that this was an educated and charismatic woman, who was brave and strong enough to oftentimes turn the course of events to her advantage. And undoubtedly, her charms, which she used to bewitch two of the most influential men of her time, will help keep her forever in our memory.

And as an Egyptian queen, the very act of remembrance by others ensures her an eternal life...

*Matija Črešnar, Archaeologist Ph.D.*



Illustrated by Peter Škerl  
Translated by Anja Podgornik

The Ptolemy Dynasty of Ancient Egypt lasted from 305 B.C. until 30 B.C., when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

12th August, 30 B.C.  
Cleopatra the Egyptian Queen sat on her cushioned throne and thought about her life.



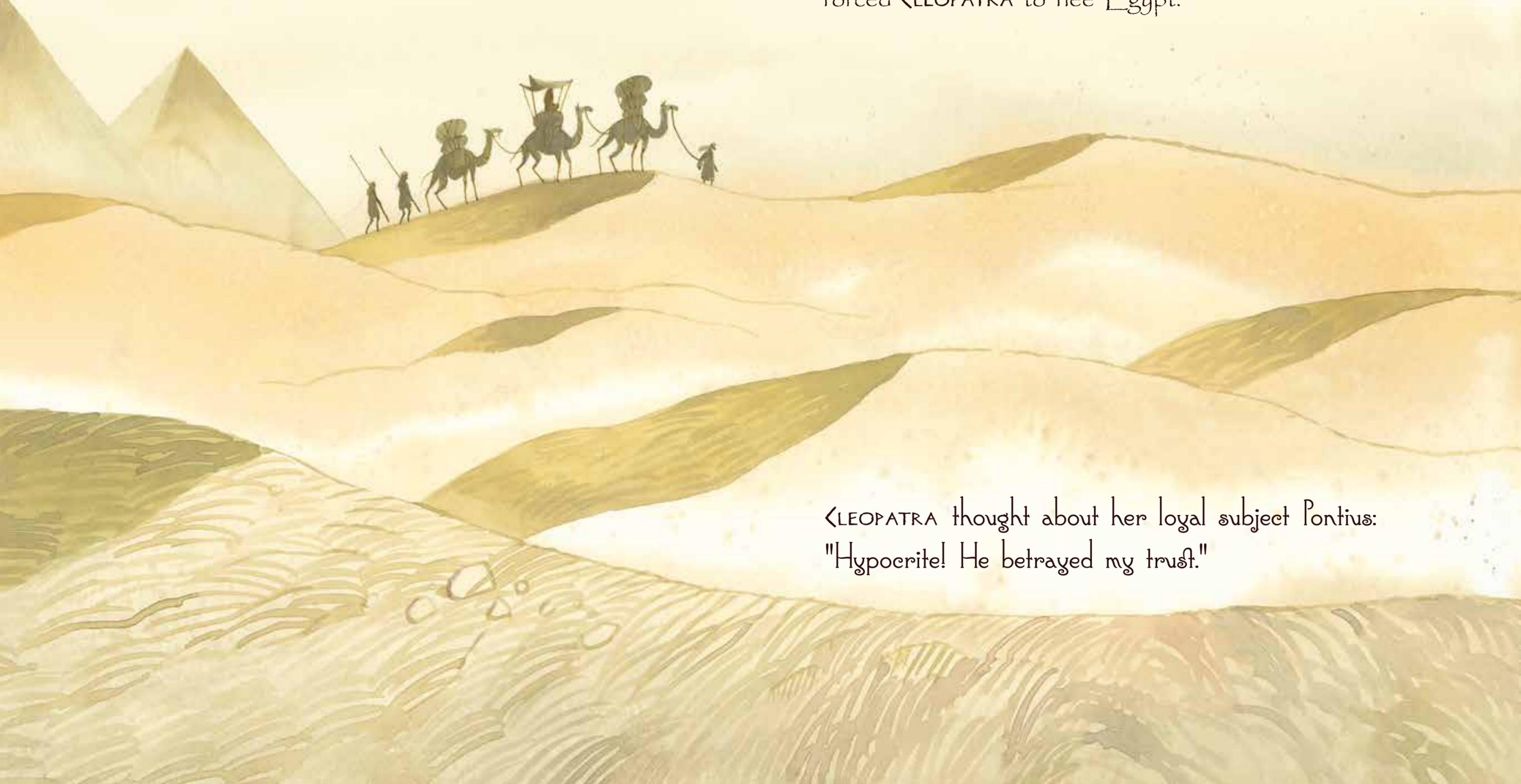
Her father, Ptolemy XII., had died in 51 B.C. In his will, he left the then eighteen-year-old queen CLEOPATRA VII. and her ten-year-old brother Ptolemy XIII. in charge of the kingdom. Cleopatra was convinced she could change Egypt back to the status of its former glory days.



But she and her brother spent the first three years of their reign trying pull Egypt out of financial debt. The Nile failed to provide a sufficient amount of water and the people were starving.

Tensions rose between CLEOPATRA and Ptolemy XIII.

CLEOPATRA wanted to rule Egypt by herself. But Ptolemy also refused to share power, so his followers forced CLEOPATRA to flee Egypt.



CLEOPATRA thought about her loyal subject Pontius:  
"Hypocrite! He betrayed my trust."

Ptolemy XIII. was left in charge of the kingdom for a while. But Egypt was soon taken over by a great conqueror, the Roman commander-in-chief Gaius Julius Caesar. During the short battle that followed, Ptolemy XIII. was killed and Caesar gave CLEOPATRA back her glory.

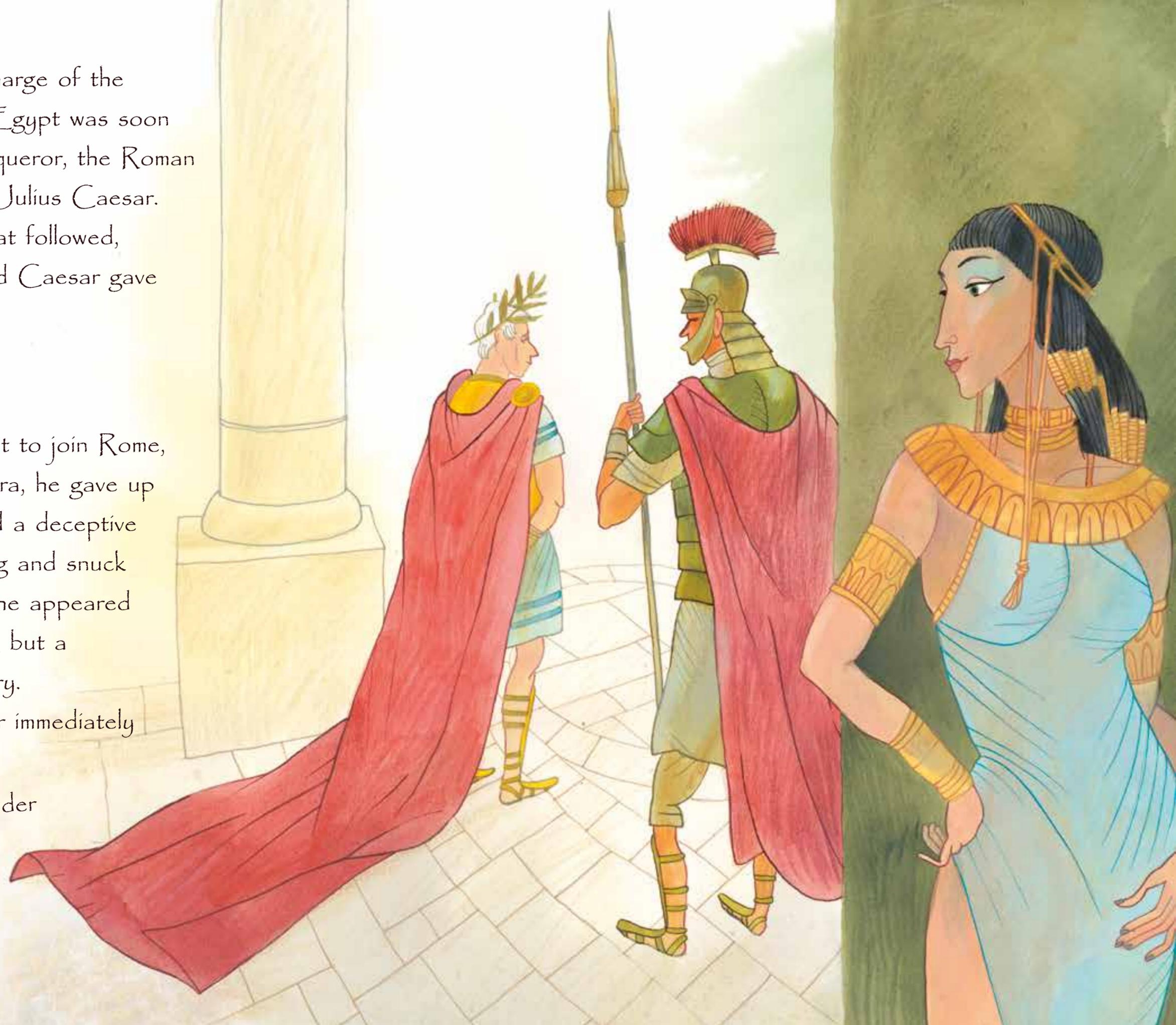
CLEOPATRA smiled.

Caesar first wanted Egypt to join Rome, but upon meeting Cleopatra, he gave up his plans. She remembered a deceptive act: she hid herself in a rug and snuck inside Caesar's palace. She appeared before him wearing nothing but a soft-veiled dress and jewelry.

Caesar fell in love with her immediately and with his help,

Egypt prospered again under

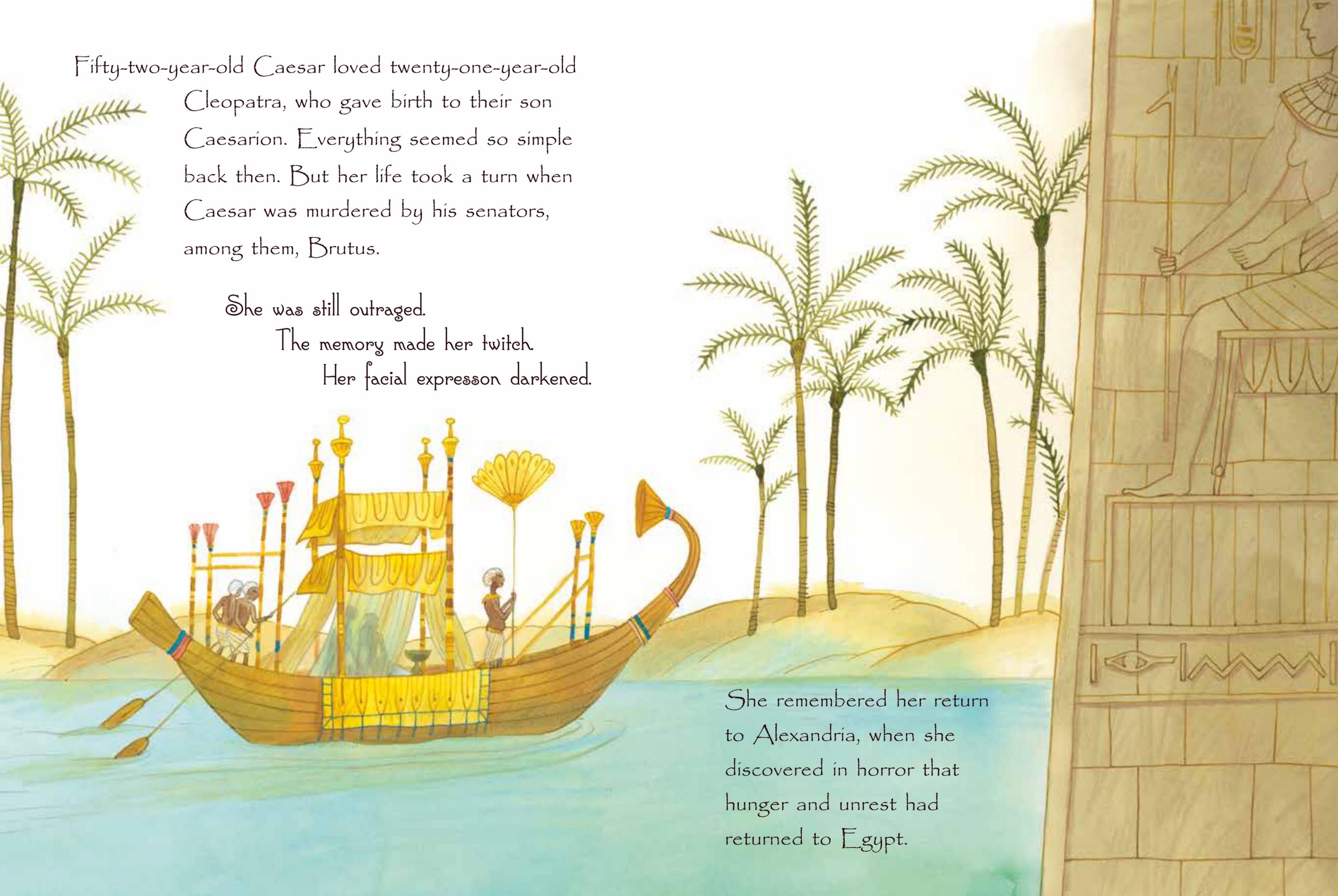
CLEOPATRA'S rule.



Fifty-two-year-old Caesar loved twenty-one-year-old Cleopatra, who gave birth to their son Caesarion. Everything seemed so simple back then. But her life took a turn when Caesar was murdered by his senators, among them, Brutus.

She was still outraged.  
The memory made her twitch.  
Her facial expression darkened.

She remembered her return to Alexandria, when she discovered in horror that hunger and unrest had returned to Egypt.





After Caesar's death, Marc Anthony, who was Caesar's friend and general, along with Emilius Lepid, another general, and his nephew Octavian formed the second Roman triumvirate. They wanted to take over and share power. They had defeated their conspirators - Caesar's murderers. By doing so, they avenged his death and ultimately split the Empire into three parts.

◀LEOPATRA reached her hand towards the tray of grapes at her side and twirled a grape between her elegant, ring-adorned fingers. Out of the corner of her eye, she spied her servant Iras. Iras was always available for her mistress, in case she required anything. What was she thinking about? Oh yes, Marc Anthony...

When Marc Anthony joined Octavian to help him to defeat Brutus, they summoned all rulers to a gathering, including ◀LEOPATRA.

She remembered that when she sailed into the port in a spectacular ship and invited Marc Anthony on board. She knew he would be impressed. Awestricken by her beauty and intelligence, he followed her to Alexandria. She had very fond memories of those times. She had never been so in love before.



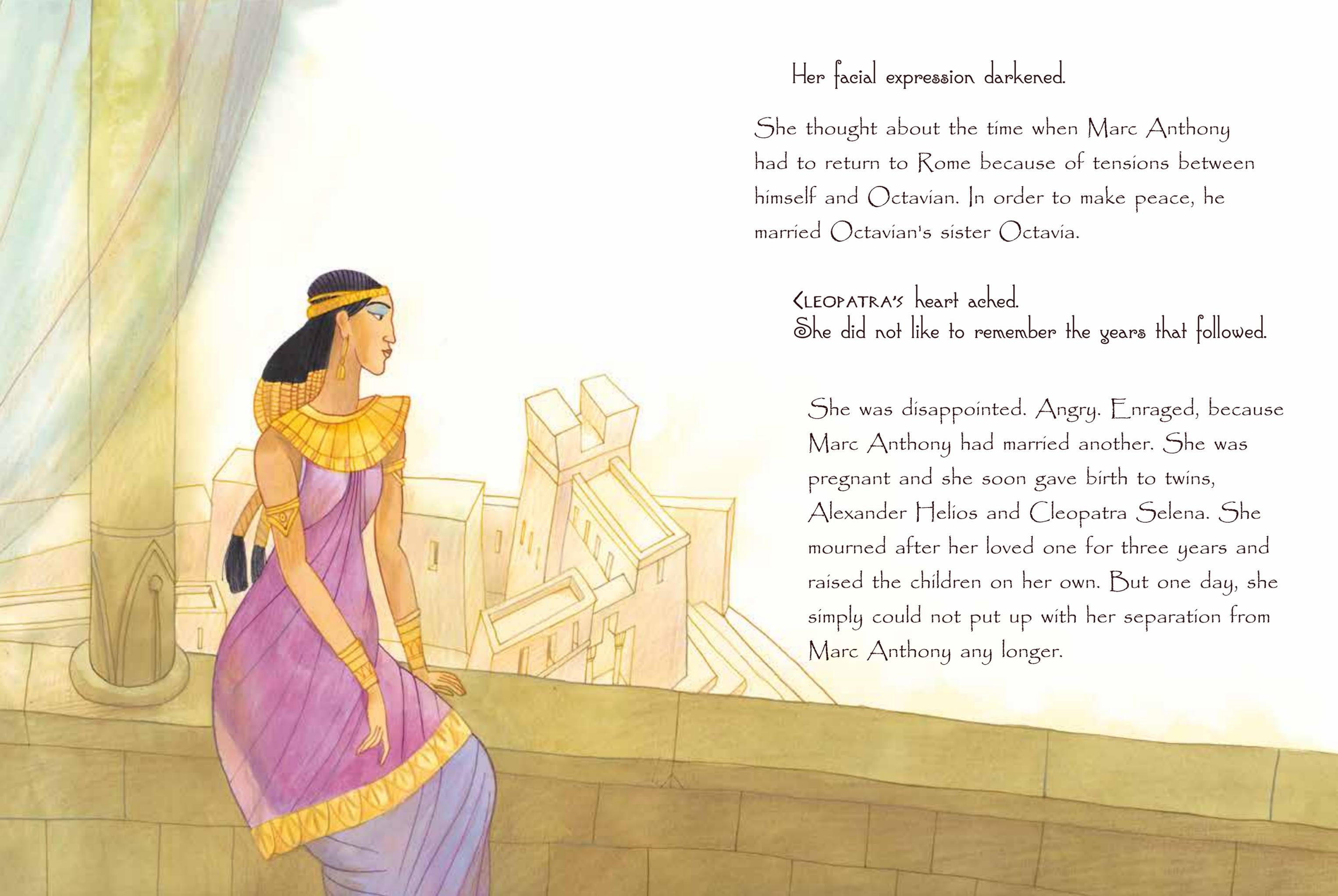
Her facial expression darkened.

She thought about the time when Marc Anthony had to return to Rome because of tensions between himself and Octavian. In order to make peace, he married Octavian's sister Octavia.

CLEOPATRA'S heart ached.

She did not like to remember the years that followed.

She was disappointed. Angry. Enraged, because Marc Anthony had married another. She was pregnant and she soon gave birth to twins, Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selena. She mourned after her loved one for three years and raised the children on her own. But one day, she simply could not put up with her separation from Marc Anthony any longer.



She went to see him. As a ruler of the eastern lands, he spent most of his time on the battlefield. His love for her was once again aflame. She gave birth to their third child, Ptolemy II Philadelphus.



CLEOPATRA and Marc Anthony promised each other to stay together for all eternity. They got married. Octavian was enraged. His sister had been humiliated! He was determined to destroy Cleopatra. He proclaimed her to be a witch who had put a spell on Marc Anthony. Her former alliances had started to turn their backs on her and Marc Anthony was losing one battle after the next.



Convinced he was close to completing his agenda, Octavian announced that CLEOPATRA had committed suicide. Upon hearing this news, Marc Anthony became so devastated he threw himself on his sword and died. CLEOPATRA did not find out about this in time to save him. She ran over to him. She held him in her arms and her tears flowed. Marc Anthony was dead.

She wiped the tears from her eyes.

Again she recalled the vows she and Anthony had taken. She, too, could not imagine her life without him. And Octavian... She could never escape his hatred. **CLEOPATRA**, who remained seated on her cushioned throne, summoned her two most loyal servants.

"Today is the day," she announced to them.

Charmion and Iras shrugged. They could not believe the day had actually come. They both hesitated. But **CLEOPATRA** stood up and insisted:

"I am ready."

Iras brought her a colourful little bottle with poison in it and a basket with an Egyptian cobra. **CLEOPATRA** took a few sips of the poison.

"Thank you both for your loyalty,"

were her last words, before she closed her eyes forever.

Iras and Charmion could no longer hold back their tears. They made a decision. They each took a long drink from the little bottle and followed the queen of kings to eternity.





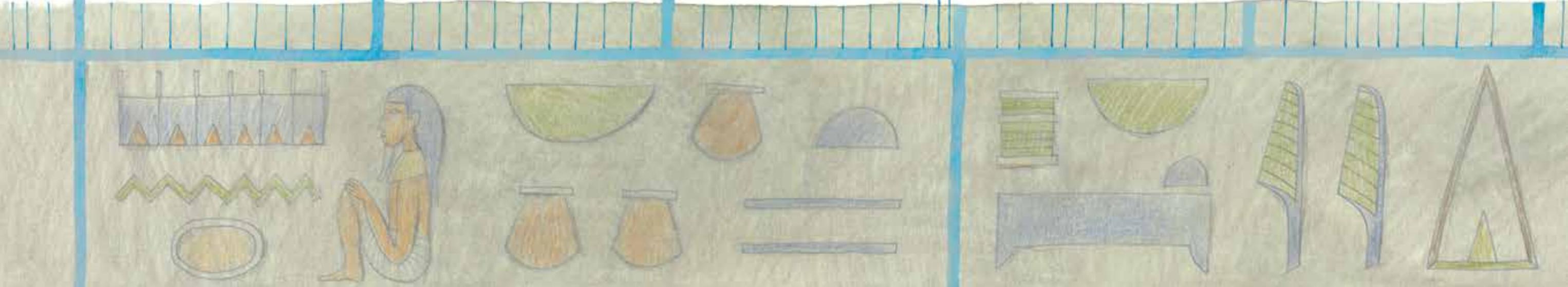
3000 B.C.

2000 B.C.

1000 B.C.

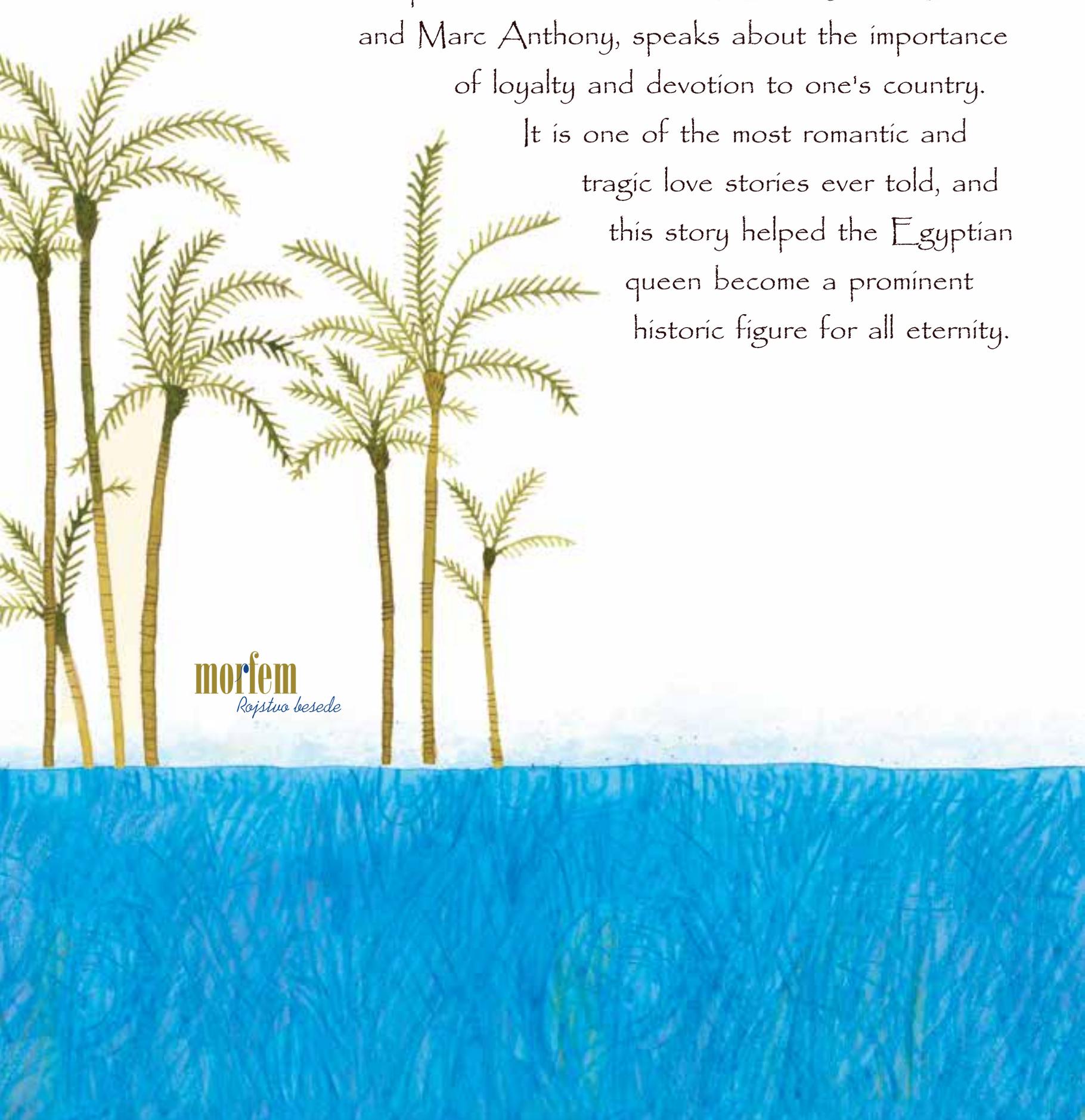
Cleopatra VII. 51-30 B.C.

O



Ancient Egypt, one of the first civilisations born in the fertile valley of the Nile, around 3000 B.C., still enchants us to this day with its greatness and power. The story of Cleopatra VII., who ruled Ancient Egypt until 30 B.C. and used her wit and beauty to influence two of the most important men of the time, Gaius Julius Caesar and Marc Anthony, speaks about the importance of loyalty and devotion to one's country.

It is one of the most romantic and tragic love stories ever told, and this story helped the Egyptian queen become a prominent historic figure for all eternity.



**morfem**  
*Rojstna besede*