

THE REVENGE OF THE NINTH

Heading to Honor and Glory through Effort and Trial



Armando Roggero

The Revenge of the Ninth

Armando Roggero



GLOSSARY:

The author's wish to remain as close as possible to the language and the customs of the time result in the use of nouns and Latin names which correspond to the main places of interest in the historical tale. Other than the names of settlements, military ranks and particular objects of common use are faithfully listed.

Acquilifer = Officer bringing the symbol of the Legion

Acquitania = west France

Ad centuriam = Tighten the ranks!

Adrià, frate = Adriano shorted name, brother

Alesia = near Auxerre (France)

Aquila aurea = Golden eagle (symbol of the legions)

Aretium = Arezzo (Italy)

Ariminum = Rimini (Italy)

Augusta Praetoria = Aosta (Italy)

Augustodunum = Autun (France)

Auriga = Charioteer

AVC/aUc = Ab Urbe Condita (from the founding of Rome, 753 B.C.)

Ave = Hello

Baia = Bacoli, near Napoli (Italy)

Balteum = Belt worn over one shoulder to carry the gladius

Batavus = Dutch

Biga = Roman chariot pulled by two horses

Bononia = Bologna (Italy)

Brixia = Brescia (Italy)

Caligae = Military boots



Camulodunum = Colchester (England)
 Cappadocia = Turkish region
 Castra Pila = wooden castrum defences
 Castrum = military settlement (barracks)
 Cecubum = a type of high quality red wine
 Cenaculum = Apartment
 Centuria, pl. centuriae = 80 Legionnaires (or auxiliaries)
 Centurio, pl. centuriones = Infantry Officer (depending on his level he would command one or more centuriae. This is comparable to the rank of field sergeant, or major in the case of the centurio primus pilus)
 Cervisia = Beer
 Cingulum = Shoulder belt holding the gladius
 Cisalpinus = Person of north Italy
 Civis Romanus, pl. cives Romani = Roman citizen
 Classis = Navy
 Contubernium, pl. contubernia = 8 legionnaires who share the same tent or hut (sleeping quarters) in the camp
 Cornicen, pl. cornicines = Sort of trumpet player
 Cambria = Wales
 Cubiculum = Bedroom
 Culina = Kitchen
 Cursus honorum = Sequential order of public offices
 Decanus = Contubernium leader
 Decurio = cavalry squadron leader
 Domina, pl. dominae = Mistress of the house
 Dominus = Master of the house
 Domus = prestige house
 Eporedia = Ivrea (Italy)
 Eques, pl. equites = Cavalry warrior / s
 Equitum turma, pl. equitum turmae = Cavalry squadron / s
 Frater, pl. fraters = close friend / comrade
 Frumentarius, pl. frumentarii = secret services agent / s
 Gallia Armorica = Britain (France)



Gallia Belgica = BeNeLux

Gallia Lugdunensis = Central France, from northern to southern borders

Garum = Fermented fish sauce, supreme condiment

Gens = Name indicating family group

Gens patricia = Patrician family/ies

Gladius, pl. gladii = Short roman sword

Groma = The principal roman surveying instrument

Hora prima = First hour of the day starting at the dawn

Illyria = Region in the western part of Balkan Peninsula

Imago, pl. imagines = Officer/s bringing emperor image

Impedimenta = Baggage carried by an army or infantrymen

Impluvium = basin / pool which collects rainwater

Insulae = Block of apartment buildings in popular district

Island of Mona = now isle of Anglesey

Legatus, pl. legati = General of the Legion

Legionarius, pl. legionarii = Legionnaire/s

Lindum = Lincoln (England)

Londinium = London (England)

Lorica = armour

Lorica hamata = mail armour made of burnished iron

Lorica segmentata = plate armour made of quenched iron

Luliobona = Lillebonne (France)

Lupanar = Brothel

Lutetia = Paris (France)

Marmetinum = High quality and very expensive white wine

Massilia = Marseille (France)

Mediolanum = Milano (Italy)

Miles, pl. milites = soldier(s)

Noricum = Territory which includes today's Austria, Czech Republic and part of the Slovak Republic

Octodurus = Martigny (Switzerland)

Olà = Hi

Omenes = Sirs, gentlemen

Oppidum; pl. oppida = generic Gallic village



Optio, pl. Optiones = Non-commissioned officer, lower than the Centurion, Centurion assistant
Othona = Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex (England)
Padus = Po River (Italy)
Paenula = Cloak similar to poncho
Pancration = Spartan origin martial art
Pax romana = Roman peace (military peace)
Peristylum = Open courtyard within the house (Domus or Villas)
Pilum, pl. pila = Special designed roman spear/s
Pontus = Northeastern Turkey
Popina = fastfood
Porta decumana = one of the doors of the castrum
Porta principalis = main door of the castrum
Posca = A thirst-quenching drink consisting of a mix of water and vinegar drunk by legionnaires on the march
Proconsul = General of the provincial army (more legions together)
Pugio = roman military knife
Rudis, pl. rudes = Wooden gladius used for drill training
Suburra = crowded lower class area in the city of Roma
Tablinum = office of the domus
Taurinorum = Turin (Italy)
Thapsus = Ancien city approximately at 200 Km southeast of Carthage
Thermopolium = Restaurant, sometimes including one or more bedrooms
Tribune = Colonel
Triclinium = Dining room
Tubicen = Sort of trumpet player
Tunica laticlavata = White tunic
Verulamium = St Albans (England)
Vetulonia = Viterbo (Italy)
Vigiles = Town police corp





PROLOGUE

Camulodunum, Kalends of April 813 aUc (60 AD)

The most violent stage of the battle has now come to an end and all around, the horizon is littered with corpses of civilians and infantrymen, disfigured and piled up. For the most part they belong to settlers, united in death with the few legionnaires of the Legio IX Hispana who had remained in the oppidum and some cohorts from the same legion who had arrived to support its last stand. The cries and moans of the fleeing survivors, mercilessly caught and killed by the Briton rebels, echo in Hadrianus's ears. The smoke rising from the burning buildings engulfs everything and obscures his view... The sight of the bloodbath is confused and complicated, not just because of the smoke: the young legionnaire slowly lowers his shield to the ground and, gathering his strength, brings his hand to his left eye... a dense, sticky liquid seeps between his fingers and soaks his forearm: blood.

Hadrianus realises that he has been injured in the fighting. The bodies of several lifeless barbarians lie in front of him, his gladius embedded in one of their chests, forcing him to recall in a flash the terrible moments preceding the tragedy.

Suddenly the mist clears from his mind and from his numerous, confused thoughts two take sudden priority: the fate of the legion and saving Cornelia. He gets to his knees with great difficulty, his head spinning... the horizon is blurred and sways dangerously in front of him, finally coming to a stop before his eyes. He picks up an abandoned helmet beside his shield and with all his



remaining strength drew himself up and stands, ready to fight.

Hadrianus places the Optio helmet on his head and in the very same moment feels a renewed energy flowing through his tired body, and with it, an even greater sense of responsibility: he must ensure the legion's vexillum is recovered and returned to the ranks of the Roman army. At the same time he hopes to find Cornelia alive. Cornelia, the young woman who followed him to Britannia for love and now risks paying the ultimate price for a choice that was dictated by the heart and her desire for freedom.

Hadrianus's gaze begins to wander across the desolation that surrounds him and falls unexpectedly upon a group of jubilant Briton warrior women who are dividing up the few surviving Roman women for their future slaves. The terrorised wretches are pushed around as greedy hands relieve them of the few treasures they possess while they await their fate. In the distance he can make out an upright figure amongst the prisoners bravely attempting to stand up to the aggression: could it be Cornelia? Alas, Hadrianus cannot yet think of himself and his emotions; he must first fulfil his duty to the Legion and find the lost vexillum.

Reluctantly he must stop thinking about Cornelia. Wiping some blood from his face he turns in the opposite direction.

Scanning the desolate expanse of tortured corpses he stops and tries to remember: where could the vexillarius be? When the battle between his centuria and that large group of Iceni began, he was just a few steps ahead of him, ready for the assault.

Not far away, among the muddy and blood-stained pebbles, he catches sight of the grey wolf-fur covering some wretched remains massacred by axe blows... there he is. Even in death, the vexillarius protected the vexillum, covering it with his body after being injured. Hadrianus gently moves the man's upper-body, whispering a thank you to the miles for his courage and sense of duty. He recovers the symbol of the legion and clutches it tightly to his chest.

In an instant, he remembers what is happening behind him and rushes towards the crowd of warrior women who are rejoicing in their spoils. Lidia Cornelia is among them, he is sure of it... Mindless of the enemies surrounding him



he runs through the rubble and corpses, calling out the young woman's name, clasp his shield in his left hand and holding the vexillum in his right.

The warrior women who at this point are busy binding Cornelia and taking her away, look up at Hadrianus who is running threateningly towards them... His courageous and daring act suddenly provokes stupor and fear, rooting the women motionless to the spot, incapable of reacting... When he is just a few paces away from them his progress is abruptly halted by a blow between his shoulder blades. He falls to the ground, almost in a dive... He loses his shield but with his fingertips he manages to touch Lidia Cornelia's arm while the vexillum remains tightly clasped in his right hand.

Cornelia, already on her knees at the feet of the warrior women, watches Hadrianus with her eyes full of tears as he falls backwards on the ground losing consciousness. Before fainting, he turns his face to the sky one more time and meets the cold, cruel gaze of that towering Iceni woman with the long ginger hair who is holding the long spear which knocked him off his feet... "this is not the first time we have met, warrior woman..." Hadrianus thinks.

Haughty, she turns to the defeated pair prostrate on the floor: her words are incomprehensible but her tone implies the severity of her verdict, one inspired by hate and vengeance...

The day draws to a close. The dead and the few survivors are counted. Among them, those who show potential signs of recovery are brought to the hospital inside what is left of the castrum. Even that has been pillaged and burned. There are around 50,000 victims, both civilians and legionnaires, all massacred by the Briton rebels. Camulodunum is completely destroyed; its temple, dedicated to Imperator Claudius, one of the most powerful symbols of the Roman spirit in the province, has been razed to the ground.





CHAPTER I

Two years before...

It has been weeks since Hadrianus Domitius Martius, having left Taurinorum at the beginning of a mild spring, began marching to Vetulonia, a settlement a few dozen miles from Roma,

Walking the roads of the peninsula he spots many other young men of about the same age. Some are on foot, many others on carts and a few on horses, yet they are all heading in the same direction: castrum Herculus. On the smaller roads where the paths are unpaved, the carts and horses create vast clouds of dust as they pass. Fortunately when it rains, water drains and flows away without a problem thanks to the masterful engineers who constructed the roads. Even during downpours Hadrianus doesn't worry about being splashed by the passing carts which drive on without coming across vast puddles.

Every evening the young men take some respite from the long journey, stopping in cities, villages or rest stations along the road. Their typical youthful enthusiasm and energy counteract the usual fatigue of a long march and though the only food in their packs is rusks, this seems more than sufficient nourishment for them when alternated with very occasional hot meals consisting of spelt polenta - meals that warm the body and soul, eaten in modest taverns dotted along the Imperium's network of roads.

His thoughts turn to training camp and beyond, dreaming of the day when he will be marching alongside other milites in a legion of the Roman army in his lorica and studded caligae. His destination is not important, it could be anywhere in the world - fate will guide him towards his destiny and long-



awaited glory.

Now, continuing his long journey along that paved roadside path, he feels even closer to reaching his goal. He has already passed the river Arnus and the mile-stones indicate that the next oppidum is just a short distance away. The sunset lights up the horizon and the walls of Aretium appear before his eyes. He enters the oppidum, looking around for a popina or tavern where he might get some hot soup and perhaps find a bed for the night. He begins to walk along the via decumana and soon finds a place that suits him.

When he enters he notices other young men sitting at tables, evidently also from the north of Italy. They eat and drink while they talk, toasting each other with cries of “prosit” in anticipation of their future successes on the battlefield once they are legionnaires.

Some are travelling together, others make use of the long tavern benches to make friends with their neighbours and exchange information about their upcoming journey.

After days spent thinking about and marching towards his future Hadrianus cannot believe that he can finally talk to people who share his dreams and passions, encouraged by Roma’s greatness.

He approaches a table of three men just like him, a little older than twenty. Greeting them, he sits down and waits for a slave to order something to eat.

- Avete fratres, cives Romani... -

The three men do not respond. They throw him a momentary empty glance before returning to their conversation, with their backs turned. They appear to be sons of craftsmen or merchants and judging from their accents probably come from some village south of Padus.

Enthusiastically, Hadrianus continues:

- Perhaps you didn’t hear me. So, we’re marching to the same place, Vetulonia, castrum Herculus, aren’t we? Where are you from? -

The largest and most intimidating of the three takes the initiative and responds under the watchful eyes of his tongue-tied companions:

- Yes, we’re heading there... and you, Cisalpinus, why are you going there? If you fancy a career in acting, I’d advise you to head a couple of miles south to Roma. If you really want to fight, forget about the army and head on to Capua



- the gladiator arenas are more suited to someone like you. -

This brief conversation causes great hilarity among the two companions.

Hadrianus abandons his jovial tone, though tries to avoid being too negative:

- You are mistaken, fratres. I'm going to enlist to become a legionnaire. I'm heading to the training camp in Vetulonia, Castrum Herculus. -

The youngest of the three turns to his companions, saying in a loud voice:

- Marius, did you know that even Cisalpine Gauls can become legionnaires? I didn't know the privilege of serving Roma with such honour was granted to barbarians? -

In a calm and deep voice, Hadrianus replies:

- Perhaps you were too busy doing other things to be familiar with the history, but you should know that for more than a century now people from the villages between the Alps and Padus have had *ius civitatis romanae*, just as you do... -

Then in a more bitter and determined tone he continues,

- ...and in case your history needs updating, let me remind you that during the wars against Hannibal Punicus the population of Taurinorum fought alongside Roma... not like those traitors in Bononia!!! -

Hadrianus had hit the nail on the head. As their accent suggested, the three men were from Bononia. Humiliated and mocked by all those nearby who had heard the confrontation, they quickly get up, slamming their fists on the table, ready to resolve the argument with a punch-up.

Drawn over by the fuss, Ottavia Flamilla, the Junoesque owner of the tavern, strides decisively towards the four men. Not in the slightest intimidated by the size and number of contenders, she shouts:

- Children!! Try to preserve your energies for the training camp and the battle-field, if you manage to pass the four-months of probatio. There you will really find something to sink your teeth into and curb your enthusiasm! -

The young men seem distracted from their bellicose ambitions.

- Do you think I don't know what you're doing here? Every eight months or so, and often during this period, a bunch of kids just like you stop off to eat and drink in my tavern on their way to Herculus camp, thinking they're great heroes... -



As she says this, she drags Hadrianus by the arm towards an area on the other side of the large, crowded room, giving him a quick suggestion:

- Right, now order something to eat and drink... it's not free to sit at these benches and tables you know! -

Hadrianus allows himself to be led away from the reach of the three troublemakers but keeps his angry and challenging stare fixed on their faces.

- This doesn't end here, Cisalpinus... - they remind him under their breath.

Hadrianus smiles condescendingly but does not respond. He sits at the table and orders some wine and local cheese, putting down some coins - a few dupondia and sestertia - to show he can pay...

Shortly after the owner of the tavern comes to him with a tray of dishes:

- Be careful Taurinensis, make sure your journey doesn't end before you've even reached your destination. You'll be a good legionnaire... perhaps even a Centurio one day if you learn the art of diplomacy and silence... Do your best at the right moment! -

- Domina, what wisdom! If your food is as plentiful as your words I shall truly be able to satisfy my hunger after a long period of frugality! Now on another matter, I need shelter for the night and as you can see, I can pay -

- I'm sorry but as you can see it's very busy at the moment. But for a couple of sestertia perhaps you could cope with the slaves' quarter behind us. Thank the gods, I'm only offering you a bed because I too detest those louts from Bononia! Obviously you will have to disappear early tomorrow morning. And take care, I don't want trouble tonight, so watch your back! -

As she speaks the woman turns away and after gesturing goodbye to Hadrianus, she moves on, swaying her hips and surveying her customers with a rapacious gaze.

Hadrianus thanks her, smiling and nodding his head and wonders what sort of night awaits him.

In a corner Fadia, a twenty year old Illyrian slave, momentarily stops serving tables to follow the interesting scene in which her domina has just become the protagonist, defending a young Cisalpine. Everyday she sees dozens of young men pass through those doors. Very rarely are they polite or pleasant, more often than not they are arrogant and violent. It is her job to satisfy all of their



food and lodging requirements efficiently, and, for the more wealthy clients, to heat up their nights in the tavern's damp and well-used beds.

Dusk has long since passed and the customers have left the tables. Flamilla shows Hadrianus to the slaves' quarters at the back of the building where he can spend the night. He clearly recalls the warning of the three Bononian men and despite the tiredness that now washes over his mind and body, he walks towards the quarters with his eyes wide open and a hand on the pugio his father gave him before he left.

He slowly crosses the courtyard and despite the darkness he is certain he is alone. Perhaps there will be another opportunity to finish the argument but tonight can surely be dedicated to a well-earned rest...

Hadrianus enters the building where several slaves are already asleep in divided compartments, the men in the first part and the women behind a curtain that runs through the whole room.

It is not as full as he would have expected and seems fairly clean. On closer inspection, it resembles a large shed for tools and skins used for storing the tavern's goods, perhaps also those of a nearby butcher's shop.

Finding a free and sheltered corner doesn't prove terribly difficult and the young man arranges his pack in a few minutes and lies down, awaiting the arrival of refreshing sleep... Suddenly, the silence is broken by approaching footsteps. The steps are light and cautious, although still audible to the ears of a future legionnaire who is, without fail, always on the alert.

"Those coward Bononians were waiting for the right moment to take revenge on an unarmed man in the depths of sleep... If they hoped to surprise me they will be disappointed, they will find something to sink their teeth into."

Silently, still lying down and feigning deep sleep, he stretches out his hand until he reaches something resembling a club, most likely a farm tool similar to the rake he remembers having seen nearby. The figure in the darkness slowly approaches.

Hadrianus senses its presence close to his body and without hesitating, strikes out, knocking his aggressor off his feet with a rapid low movement of the club.

- Oww! -



A cry shatters the silence of the night and some of the half-asleep slaves open their eyes and mutter words of irritation at the disturbance. A young woman falls heavily onto the straw next to Hadrianus and begins to moan in pain and fright.

- Oww, what was that for? What are you doing, Cisalpinus? Perhaps I should call one of those sleepy men to help me, or would you prefer me to run off to Flamilla and tell her that you attacked me? Dear me, if this is how you treat girls... not even Germani ones at that... -

By now it is clear, the Bononians are not involved after all. They are probably far away enjoying their well-deserved rest in some other tavern.

"Iuppiter!, who have I hit? a woman? What is she doing here amongst the slaves, and male ones at that?". Hadrianus gets up in alarm. He moves towards the body lying on the floor and catches sight of a long lock of golden hair outlined on top of a shapeless mass. The face of a young woman appears from the shadows, looking him up and down. From those features he thinks he recognises a slave who had been watching him at length that evening in the tavern. Close up, like this, she is far more beautiful than she seemed a few hours earlier. She must be about twenty years old with delicately chiselled features and, like the rest of her, her long grain-coloured hair reveal possible Gallic roots.

After the initial shock comes embarrassment. Hadrianus feels mortified at what has just happened:

- Please forgive me Miss, I was certainly not expecting you. What are you doing here? And why did you approach me? I could have seriously hurt you... I don't appreciate surprises, especially at night in a strange and potentially hostile place. -

- I didn't come here to try to kill you, fool! My name is Fadia, I finished my work at the tavern and as Ottavia Flamilla desired I accompanied a rich merchant to the cubiculum upstairs... Well, it didn't take long to realise that this impostor was not at all rich, so I left to find someone who might be more pleasant to spend my time with. -

- I understand perfectly, but perhaps you are not as cunning as you think. I am even less wealthy than that old man and I want to wake up early tomorrow morning to continue marching to Vetulonia. -



She smiles and with a flirtatious look replies:

- Don't worry Cisalpinus, your bag is safe, I'm not asking you for anything. Try to understand, the days are hard here and you seem like a nice man. I'm cold... can I sleep with you? -

It is truly very tempting: Fadia is very appealing and although she is a slave, destined to serve in a modest tavern, her smile and courteous manners make her seem like a young woman from a good family, awaiting her sponsus.

- You want to stay here, Fadia? On this bed of straw amongst the other slaves? Don't you have somewhere more comfortable to spend the night? -

- No legionnaire, my proposal is a lot more enticing than you could have thought when you knocked me to the ground! Come with me. The room will be free now that that man has left after leaving me a few miserable dupondia! What a slight, this evening I am worth no more than the price of poor wine!, this, however, is the rule of the tavern and I must obey my mistress. -

Hadrianus is lost in thought and somewhat torn. On the one hand, his rest would certainly be a lot more comfortable by accepting this generous offer, but on the other, being discovered by the tavern's landlady in a cubiculum in the company of one of her slaves could give rise to some unpleasant misunderstandings, with harmful consequences, to say the least, for the rest of his journey. After a few moments of hesitation, the desire for a dry, warm bed overwhelms any sense of prudence and they leave silently through the night in the direction of the landlady's quarters.

The cubiculum, quite clean and comfortable, has just one bed to share. The night is short and rest is precious, so Hadrianus lies down on his side and turns his back to his companion to cut short the possibility of any other form of comfort. A few minutes later, he hears a small rustle and soon realises that Fadia is slowly, languidly coming closer, pushing herself towards him and passing her warm hands along his neck and shoulders in a hypnotic massage.

- Do not deny yourself, legionnaire, do not offend me. You are the first man that I have genuinely liked since I arrived here. I have the right to think about my own pleasure sometimes and not only about the pleasure of those who pay to have me. I have been thinking about how it would be to lay in your arms since the moment you entered the tavern. Won't you be a gentleman and give



me what I'm asking for? -

The young man is suspicious:

- Fadia, I'm not here for this, I told you: I only want to regain my strength so that I can continue my journey tomorrow! And why should I believe you? What struck you about me, how I was eating? How I was drinking or how I came into the tavern? Or did you enjoy the disagreement with those three louts? Perhaps you still think you might scrape together a few sestertia to please your mistress. -

Saddened and offended, the young woman stiffens and turns her back on the body that so attracts her:

- This is too much! I thought you were bright, Romanus! Instead it seems you can't see beyond the tip of your own nose! -

Muttering something in an incomprehensible language she makes her disappointment clear.

- You're right Fadia, I was unfair. It just seemed strange that a beautiful girl like you was looking for a simple, aspiring miles like me. Come here and I'll give you a proper apology... -

Holding her tight, Hadrianus slides his hands along her shoulders and begins to caress her tenderly. In the darkness of the cubiculum their eyes meet and their lips come together, the garments that divide them soon fall to the floor and for hours they will have no time left for words.

Contrary to his initial intentions the young Hadrianus wakes at the crack of dawn after having slept for just a short while. Fabia is lying languidly with her head on his shoulder, reminding him of the night's events and also the need to get up as soon as possible and start off.

- Good morning legionnaire, I see you're an early riser! You don't have to run away so soon, don't worry. Flamilla will order me to tidy the cubiculum but not before the hora tertia. We can stay for a bit longer. -

- Fadia, I have to get going immediately! You knew that full well when you brought me here last night! -

- It's true Hadrianus, the sun is rising and it would be better not to delay any longer! Listen to me, take me to Roma with you, I've never been. I am already twenty years old and I have worked in one tavern or another across central Italia



since I was sixteen. I've been here for more than six months and I've never seen the heart of the Imperium. What's it like? I wonder how many people there are, how many palaces... and temples and markets... -

Hadrianus, still not entirely awake, tries to take in all the girl's persistent questions:

- Hold on a moment, dear! I'm afraid you have misunderstood me. I have never been to Roma and anyway I'll be stopping at the training camp many miles before the oppidum - mine is not a journey for discovering the marvels of the Urbs! As if this wasn't enough, you are not a free woman but the property of Flamilla so even if I would have liked to, I cannot aid your escape. I'm sorry, but I am not looking for trouble!

But more than anything, I'm still not a legionnaire. Over the next six months I'll have to fully commit myself to becoming one. This means I'll have absolutely no time to see you and above all, I wouldn't know where to put you up. I cannot be worrying about you at the moment, I simply can't. But you must understand that I'm sorry... and I thank you for last night... but I can't let you become a part of my plans. -

Fadia is saddened and disappointed:

- You, civis Romanus, have never been to Roma!! That's impossible! So why are you so proud? Why do you talk of the glory and greatness of Roma? Why do you want to enlist? I really don't understand you - wouldn't it have been better to stay with your family, at home? You had the chance to choose, no one forced you to fight and dedicate your life to the lives of others for the greatness of a name or an idea!

I mean, if I could have chosen, I certainly would have stayed at home, free... If my father hadn't rebelled against the praetorians, refusing to give them his freshly caught fish, all because of that little boy who we discovered to be the Emperor's architect!! My father was arrested, our assets were confiscated and I was taken as a slave and sold many, many times until Ottavia Flamilla bought me six months ago! Is this the justice of Roma for which you would sacrifice your youth?! -

Interrupting her invective, Hadrianus, who had already lost patience and could no longer wait to leave, replies:



- I have had little time to judge but it doesn't seem as if they treat you that badly here. In fact, I would say that I got the impression last night that every so often you actually enjoy it here! You could always get freed and marry a civis Romanus - you are truly very beautiful and you certainly don't lack initiative! -
- Thank you, Cisalpinus, I really am staggered by your wisdom but I wouldn't want you to waste any more of your precious advice on me! I hoped that you would help me but instead you are just like all the other men who come to this tavern! Do you know nothing of the real world? -

The young man, now very irritated, gets up and prepares to leave, concluding:
- I admit I was happy in Taurinorum with my parents and my brothers. I worked at my father's brick making workshop beside the river and I was free to do whatever I wished with my time. But Roma is greatness, it is civilization and power, all three at the same time. I have been training for years just for this and I cannot wait to join a legion, to be a part of the most powerful army in the world and to bring the glory of Roma to those corners of the globe still in the hands of barbarians and barbarity! But why am I talking to you, woman? You wouldn't understand, I'm just wasting my time... and I do not have time to waste this morning! -

- What a sad way to part company! Good luck Taurinensis, I hope to see you again someday in good health and not too badly injured. If you should stop at this tavern again remember me and promise me that you will ask Flamilla what became of me... because I doubt I shall still be here!! -

With a broad smile across his face, Hadrianus, now dressed, gathers his baggage and after nodding in her direction, turns and leaves, finally starting off towards Castrum Herculius.

