

Christine Lindop

# ROMAN HISPANIA



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# Contents

Introduction: on the road .....	5
1. Lucius Petronius longs for the sea .....	9
2. Marcus is keeping watch .....	15
3. A letter from Augustus.....	21
4. Aelius is very pleased with himself.....	27
5. Julia talks about her bar .....	31
6. Caius Julius Lacer has finished the job.....	35
7. Sextilius starts the festival.....	41
8. Felix is off to work.....	47
Afterword.....	53
Glossary.....	56
Before reading activities.....	64
While reading activities.....	65
After reading activities .....	70

# 1. Lucius Petronius longs for the sea

*It's 139 B. C. Lucius Petronius, a foot soldier in the Roman army under Quintus Servilius Caepio, is marching towards **Valentia**, after the end of the Lusitanian Wars.*

Gods! My feet hurt. They say you get used to marching in the Roman army – but they're wrong! My head may be used to it, but my feet aren't. But at least we're back on a proper Roman road again.

Maybe it was spending all that time on the **dirt\* tracks** of Lusitania. It's a rough place! Hot, dry, **dusty**, stony – I'm really not sorry to leave it behind! It's hard to move things around up there, so transporting **supplies** was **exhausting**. As for finding food and water – sometimes when we stopped for the night, we were so thirsty that we almost couldn't speak.

There aren't any towns – well, not what I call a proper Roman town, with baths and markets and things like that. All you can see for miles are mountains, and hills, and a river now and then. And, of course, the Lusitanians! Everyone's heard of that lot... But in case you haven't, they're a Celtic people that live between the river **Durius** and the river **Tagus**, over in the west of Hispania.

Now I'll say this for the Lusitanians – they're good fighters. They're pretty **tough**. I suppose it comes from living in this **awful** country. But they can run off over those mountains like mountain goats. Then they

\* Words that look like **this** appear in the glossary at the end of the book.

jump out and surprise you when you don't expect it. They look pretty frightening when they come after you: all dressed in black, with their long hair flying, and their **nasty** little knives held out. You really want to turn around and run away. But we don't do that. We're Roman soldiers!



Did I mention that I can't wait to get home to Rome? Good wine – that's what I miss. Goat's meat isn't bad, but I'm **longing** for a dish of fish. You don't get many fish in the mountains of Hispania!

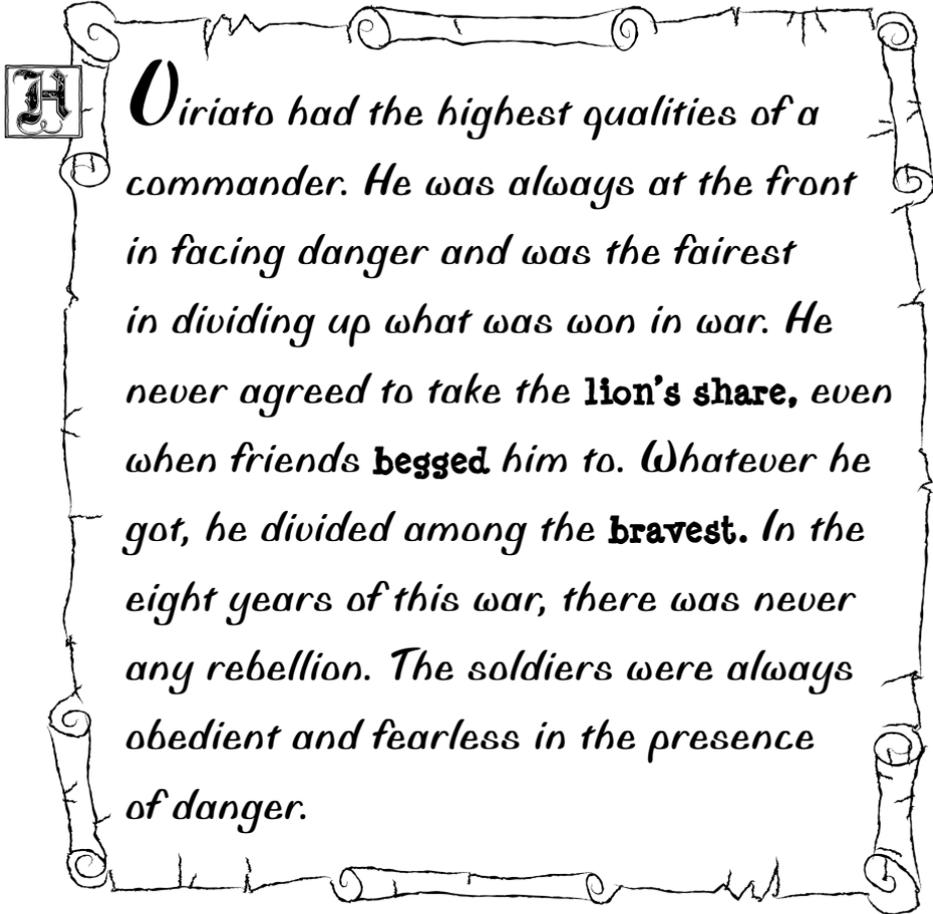
Left, right, left, right. We must be near Valentia now. As we march I can't help thinking about the war. It's a dirty business, of course it is – it's war, not dancing! Nasty things happen – sometimes thousands of our men die, and sometimes thousands of theirs. There's a story about the **proconsul** Quintus Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (pew, what a mouthful!). He captured a group of Lusitanian bandits whose leader was someone called Connoba. Aemilianus let Connoba go free – but he cut off the hands of ALL his men! I think that's worse than killing them. What can you do if you've got no hands??!!

But it's the death of Viriato I'm thinking about. I know – he was the enemy. But it's not so long ago that he was being called a friend of the Roman people. People even said that the Lusitanian Wars had finished for good. I wonder how Viriato wanted to die. Probably at the head of his people, in the middle of some great battle. But the story I've heard is quite different.

They say that Viriato didn't sleep very much, and when he did, he slept in his armour. That way he was always ready to fight. But Viriato's friends – Audax, Ditalco and Minurus – **betrayed** him. They had been to see Quintus Servilius Caepio, the general in charge of our army. Caepio gave them gifts of money and promises of more to come if they would kill Viriato. Those three went into Viriato's **tent** at night, when he was sleeping. They **stabbed** him in the throat, which wasn't protected by his armour. Then the three traitors returned to Caepio and asked for the rest of their money. 'Rome does not pay traitors who kill their **chief,**' Caepio answered them. What a sad ending! I hope he was asleep when they killed him. Imagine seeing your friends with a knife at your throat!

Next time we betray our leader,  
let's get full payment in **ADVANCE!**





**H**

*O*riato had the highest qualities of a commander. He was always at the front in facing danger and was the fairest in dividing up what was won in war. He never agreed to take the **lion's share**, even when friends **begged** him to. Whatever he got, he divided among the **bravest**. In the eight years of this war, there was never any rebellion. The soldiers were always obedient and fearless in the presence of danger.

But forget all that. I think I can see something I've been waiting to see for a long, long time. There it is! It's the sea! **Mare nostrum** – our sea! I'd forgotten what so much water looked like – blue, and cool, and wonderful. I don't care if I never see another mountain as long as I live. I just want to get my hot, sore feet into that lovely cool water.



# Lusitanian Times

Sometime in 139 B.C.

## Hero's send-off for Viriato!

It was time for the last goodbye to our popular hero Viriato yesterday.



But the Lusitanian forces are still in shock at the sudden loss of their great leader.

'We just can't believe it,' one local leader told me. 'He was so brave, and so fair. It seems so cruel that he's gone. I don't know where we'll find another leader like him.'

Viriato's body, dressed in wonderful **robes** of green and gold, was put on top of a tall funeral **pyre**, and burned in a great fire. **Priests** made sacrifices of sheep and goats. Soldiers, on foot or on horseback, marched around the funeral pyre, singing songs of **praise** to their departed leader. This continued until the last of the fire had gone out.

After the funeral, there were competitions for the soldiers – riding, **wrestling** and running. But many soldiers are angry and unhappy about Viriato's death. 'I don't know exactly what happened,' one soldier told me. 'But people are saying that it was Audax, Ditalco and Minurus who killed him.'

If it's true, that's really shocking! Audax was his closest friend! I can tell you this – if we catch those three traitors, their lives won't be worth living. And we won't stop looking for them.'

We expect to hear very soon who the new leader of the Lusitanian forces will be. One thing is certain – he's going to have a hard job

stepping into Viriato's shoes. Viriato was a very clever fighter who led the Lusitanian people against the Romans with great success.

He'll go down in history as one of the most successful fighters to oppose the Romans in Hispania – and maybe anywhere in the world.

**For the latest on the hunt for the traitors, see tomorrow's Lusitanian Times!**

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# Glossary

**afford:** be able to pay for something

**Alan:** person belonging to an ancient tribe originally from the northern Caucasus that moved into the Roman Empire in the early 5th century A.D.

**ally:** country or person that is friendly with another country or person

**ambush:** surprise attack

**amphora** (*pl. amphorae*): large clay jar used for storing olive oil or wine

**arrange:** organise

**ash:** powder that is left over after something is burnt

**Asturica Augusta:** Roman name for modern-day Astorga

**awful:** very bad, terrible

**Baetica:** Roman province that covered much of modern-day Andalucía

**ban:** make something illegal

**barge:** flat-bottomed boat

**beg:** implore, supplicate

**bet:** be sure about something

**betray:** commit an act of disloyalty

**boom:** grow fast and with vigour

**bore:** make a tunnel by removing rock or other material

**brave:** courageous, valiant

**bravery:** courage

**bury:** put under the ground

**Caesaraugusta:** Roman name for modern-day Zaragoza

**cart:** vehicle with wheels, usually pulled along by horses, mules or other animals

**Carthaginian:** person from Carthage, an ancient city in North Africa

**Carthago Nova:** Roman name for modern-day Cartagena

**central heating:** system that heats an entire house

**chat:** talk informally

**chief (n.):** leader of a tribe

**circus:** rectangular stadium used for chariot racing

**claw:** pincer at the end of the limbs of some arthropods

**come about:** happen, occur

**Conimbriga:** Roman name for the modern-day Portuguese town Condeixa-a-Nova

**consul:** senior elected official in the Roman Republic

**copper:** reddish-brown coloured metal

**Corduba:** Roman name for modern-day Córdoba

**crab:** type of crustacean

**creep:** move silently and slowly

**crush:** use pressure to destroy something or break it into small pieces

**dam:** barrier built across a river to obstruct the flow of water

**day in, day out:** every day

**deal:** agreement

**defeat:** win a victory over an opponent or enemy

**dirt:** made of earth or soil

**dock:** artificial basin where goods are put onto ships

**dust:** small particles of earth or other substance

# Before reading activities

## 1. Match the Roman place names to the modern place names.

Emerita Augusta

Valencia

Gades

Mérida

Hispalis

Cartagena

Valentia

Zaragoza

Caesaraugusta

Tarragona

Corduba

Cádiz

Tarraco

Sevilla

Carthago Nova

Córdoba

## 2. Choose the word that best matches the definition. Then write a sentence using the word.

a) People that tried to colonise Hispania before the Romans arrived

i) The Visigoths ii) The Vandals iii) The Carthaginians

b) People that fought against the Romans in Hispania

i) The Lusitanians ii) The Gauls iii) The Greeks

c) People defeated by the Emperor Augustus in the final phase of the conquest

i) The Iberos ii) The Cantabri iii) The Visigoths

d) People that dominated the Iberian Peninsula immediately after the Romans

i) The Muslims ii) The Vikings iii) The Visigoths